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Samuel R. Delany Modernism, Postmodernism, Science Fiction



When, Beside North Carolina's Lake Eden in the nineteen-fifties, Charles Olson was teaching at small, financially foundering, but intensely intellectual Black Mountain College. The poet advised his writing students, though they should not try to reproduce reality in words, they should nevertheless strive "to keep [their] fictions up to the real"—that is, in the world of their stories and in their characters' response to it they should try to create the same order of richness and complexity they saw about them. The paradox here is that what begins as an observed relation between the structure of life and the possibilities of art is finally bodied forth in the texture of language; for that's where most writers turn when they try to produce wondrous richness and complexity. To the extent we perceive a writer to be following Olson's advice, we perceive a writer as concerned with style—style that runs from the splatter, froth, and sprinkle of the sentence wash about its objects, to the resonances and harmonies a-ring throughout the scene, to the gustatory concert and contrast, the successive tastes and timbres in course upon course, chapter after chapter, that constitute what is sometimes called narrative sweep—or just satisfying storytelling.

For writing can bear traces of individual vision at any level choices can be made.

Science fiction and fantasy writers will hear Olson's advice as particularly resonant—because we don't start with any intention of reproducing the real in the first place. The advice seems to apply even more directly to us than it does to the literary writer; it sounds out as an empowering statement about where to turn—right where we already are—for our aesthetic, without its having to disabuse us of any illusion about the possibility of reproductive completeness.

The science fiction or fantasy writer who has been around a while, however, will hear something else in that advice as well. I mean its resonances with other insights about literary production that have seemed to apply more directly to science fiction than to the literature about which they were first formulated.

In the sixties, for example, when critics were becoming excited over structuralism's energies and analyses, some turned to the early work of the Russian Formalist critics in the twenties, to find themselves reconsidering Scholovsky's notion of literature as a method for reawakening the sensibility through metaphorical "estrangement" (or *ostranenie*), or the equally interesting notion that literature was a form of *cognition*—a way of knowing the world. Well, if literature could be seen as an interplay of stylistic estrangement in a fundamentally cognitive enterprise, what about science fiction, with its overtly didactic relation to science (there's your cognition) and its insistently imaginative, alien, and un-homelike (*unheimlich*) settings and situations (there's your estrangement). What had to be ferreted out by careful and knowledgeable critical readings from the literary text seemed to braid out from the text so that anyone could spot it. The notion seemed so obvious, so self-evident, that one Yugoslavian-born critic, teaching in Canada (Darko Suvin), put forth the idea, in his numerous essays in French and English, that science fiction was the literature of "cognitive estrangement" and that cog-

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In this issue

Samuel R. Delany keeps "up to the real" in the discussion of twentieth-century literature
Kathryn Cramer examines the hidden recesses of horror
John Clute takes a blow to the head from *Castleview*
David E. Myers, John Kessel, Damon Knight and others sound the bell on "The Clarion Credo"
Greg Cox haunts the belfry in his Transylvanian Library
Charles Platt goes macho on *The Hemingway House*
As well as ringing sentences, alarming letters, resounding phrases, echoes of the great, and the roar of Death's wheels

Kathryn Cramer Literary Architecture



And when a fiercer has got his house, he may not be the richer but the poorer for it, and it be that the house has got him. . . . I know of two families in this town, who, for nearly a generation, have been trying to sell their houses in the outskirts and move into the village, but have not been able to accomplish it, and only death will set them free.

—Henry David Thoreau, "Economy" in *Walden*

This is a companion volume to *The Architecture of Fear*, edited by Kathryn Cramer and Peter D. Pautz (Arbor House, 1987). That book came out of a horror discussion group composed of Peter Pautz, David Hartwell, and me—as did *The Dark Descent*, edited by David G. Hartwell (Tor Books, 1987) and *Christmas Ghosts*, edited by Kathryn Cramer and David G. Hartwell (Arbor House, 1987). In 1985 and 1986, we met to discuss horror fiction once or twice a week in a coffee shop across the street from Arbor House, where David and Peter both worked.

We developed a theory of horror, most of which is expressed in the introduction to *The Dark Descent*. Briefly, there are three modes in horror fiction: (1) moral allegory, which is about the colorful special effects of evil and focuses upon the conflict between good and evil, for example a story like Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown"; (2) psychological metaphor, in which internal psychological states are externalized, like Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher"; and (3) nature-of-reality horror, in which the primary effect is derived from throwing the nature of the world into radical doubt; my favorite example of which is Gene Wolfe's story "Seven American Nights." Having worked with this terminology for three years, I have also come to recognize that there are stories which play these modes off against one another. Examples that come to mind are "The Turn of the Screw" by Henry James and, in this volume, "Cedar Lane" by Karl Edward Wagner.

In the Afterword to *The Architecture of Fear*, entitled "Houses of
(Continued on page 3)

N-SPACE LARRY NIVEN

With an introduction by **TOM CLANCY**

On a Los Angeles talk show, Arthur C. Clarke was once asked to name his favorite writer. His immediate answer: "Larry Niven." Now Larry Niven has assembled a retrospective collection from all phases of his remarkable career, including hitherto-uncollected works like the novella "The Kiteman", as well as essays on SF, writing, and the ways of the world. Rich with gossip, storytelling vigor, and sheer science-fictional fun—this is a book for SF lovers on the order of Robert A. Heinlein's collection-cum-memoir *Expanded Universe*—a compelling distillation of SF's sense of wonder in its purest form.



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the Mind," I argued for the metaphor of the house as the mind, and made a political argument for understanding architectural horror as a way toward understanding systemic evil. By invoking the fantastic, horror allows us access to hordes of dreadful things that are too painful to perceive directly. The architecture of fear is the central horror of life in the twentieth century, an Escheresque castle in which evil has been loosed repeatedly, uncontained, has invaded our secure places and left us emotionally deadened and in doubt of both the nature of reality and the nature of the actual horrors. Horror fiction can provide insight into non-fictional horrors and, more important perhaps, awaken emotional response through the mirror of art.

Architectural horror uses architecture still more explicitly. The Jonathan Carroll story in this volume, "The Art of Falling Down," can be read as a literalization of Ellen Eve Frank's concept of literary architecture, "the habit of comparison between architecture and literature." To be called architectural horror, a story must contain at least one building of some sort. In this book there are houses, a boardinghouse, an apartment, a doll house, an ancient walled city transformed by time into a block of fused tenements, a pub, a phone booth, and more. There are roughly three kinds of literary architecture: literal architecture, explicit architectural metaphor, and submerged architectural metaphor. Since there are three of these, I am unable to resist the temptation to pair them with the three modes of horror: literal architecture paired with moral allegory, explicit architectural metaphor paired with psychological metaphor, and submerged architectural metaphor paired with nature-of-reality horror. This is a bit too pat. All stories in this book contain literal architecture, and most contain some explicit and submerged architectural metaphor. But if we ponder these linkings in terms of the most important emotional function of the architecture in a story, these linkings are useful toward an understanding of the relation of the three modes of horror to architectural horror.

In moral allegory, the architecture tends to be metaphorically related to other architecture: Your house is your fortress, keeping the bad things out. Or it is your prison, and you are locked in with them, and must throw them out.

In psychological metaphor, a house tends to be described in psychological terms, as in the famous opening paragraph of *The Hunching of Hill House*:

No live organism can continue for long to exist under conditions of absolute reality; even larks and ladybirds are supposed, by some, to dream. Hill House, not sane, stood by itself against its hills, holding darkness within; it had stood so for eighty years and might stand for eighty more. Within, walls continued upright, bricks met neatly, floors were firm, and doors were sensibly shut; silence lay steadily against the wood and stone of Hill House, and whatever walked there, walked alone.

Also, Bernard Levi St. Armand published a wonderful Jungian analysis of the house, Exham Priory, in H. P. Lovecraft's "The Rats in the Walls," entitled *The Rats of Horror In the Fiction of H. P. Lovecraft*. (The structure of the Exham Priory is psychologically similar to the house that Richard A. Lupoff's fictionalized H. P. Lovecraft visits in "The House on Rat Chert" in this volume.)

In nature-of-reality horror, the structure of the house and characters' relationships have implications that undermine our confidence that we know the world. One such example is Robert Aickman's story "The Hospice," in which curtains conceal not windows but blank walls, and all the cues that we cling to in order to orient ourselves only serve to further disorient us.

As Julia Kristeva has argued in her book *Powers of Horror*, the emotional subject matter of horror is material on the edge of repression. If the material were completely repressed, we would have no access to it. So the borderland on the edge of repression is horror's natural territory. There are various ways to define horror fiction, but one of the most useful is that horror fiction is fiction whose emotional territory is horror.

Thus, the occupation of the horror writer is not to exceed all limits, but to dance around them, now stepping out, now stepping back,

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gracefully pulling us along while making us acutely aware of where the lines are. Some have recently argued that it is a horror writer's job to go too far, to break all taboos, exceed all limits. And while this spatial metaphor has some merit, its application has some problems. Once one goes too far beyond the edge of repression, the symbols cease to signify, cease to mean. The result seems unnecessarily gross, or silly, or—worse still—boring. Excess drains and devalues the psychological language of violence.

It is easy to equate limits with parental requirements that you be home before ten o'clock or else you're grounded for a week. But this is a very limited concept of limits. Myself, I subscribe to the mathematical concept of limits. Limits restrict, but limits can also give a sense of inevitability—the kind of inevitability that produces mind-expanding terror.

In architectural horror, the structure of the house becomes an embodiment of the limits—both limits on what can get inside, but also limits on the tensile strength of the beams holding up the ceiling. Our understanding of architecture forces a deadpan rationality onto our formless fears:

The pentagon, the pentagram, like all patterns, they are defined by their limits. Incorporated in the harmonious patterns of fruits and flowers, they exemplify an epigram attributed to Pythagoras, that *limits give form to the limitless*. This is the power of limits (György Doczi, *The Power of Limits*).

This is the terrifying beauty of literary architecture and of architecture in literature.

And even the art of going too far becomes, itself, a game of limits. In 1984, when I was still a student at the University of Washington, I had some time between classes. So I decided to spend a pleasant, leisurely hour in the Henry Art Gallery which, at the time, was showing an exhibition called "Confrontations" which I knew nothing about.

I wandered, without reading, past a warning sign which said something to the effect that some viewers may find this stuff offensive, over to a well-composed photograph of a sleeping woman in a jumper. It slowly dawned upon me that the woman was not sleeping; she was dead. And those were not the burtons and straps of her jumper; that was a cross-section of her rib-cage and those were strips of flesh peeled back during autopsy. The title was "Heroin O. D., age 26" (or something like that). I went from photograph to photograph—many of which involved dead people, ranging in age from the pre-natal to the elderly—staring in disbelief, trying to convince myself that this was faked, or that these were drawings, something, anything but that these were artfully arranged corpses. I went back three times that day, and brought a friend in as a witness, just to make sure the pictures were still there and that I was not mistaken.

I bought a book of Witkin's photography which bore the label: DUE TO PRESENT CENSORSHIP FACTORS, THE PUBLISHER AND I HAVE NOT INCLUDED SEVERAL IMPORTANT PHOTOGRAPHS IN THIS PRESENTATION OF MY WORK. —JOEL-PETER WITKIN. The photograph that made such a deep impression upon me was not among those in the book.

This was not combat photography, not forensics. This was clearly art. But while people donate their bodies to science, nobody that I know of has ever donated their body to art. Someone had to give Witkin those bodies to fool with. Who? How? What laws permitted this?

The worst thing about the photographs was that they were beautiful. The issue of unacceptable content posed an artistic challenge to Witkin—a challenge which he tried to meet. Ultimately, the feeling of horrific wonder one gets from the pictures is derived from the interaction of style and content, not from content alone.

Witkin challenges his critics' self-image by placing two limits in opposition to one another: On the one hand, he has gone far outside the bounds of morality and taste through his choice of material and subject matter; on the other hand he employs classical standards of beauty on classical images. Postmodern Postmodernism, I suppose. He leaves very little room to criticize him on aesthetic grounds, requiring that we admit the role morality plays in "pure" aesthetics. This effect cannot be achieved in prose any more than it can be achieved in

painting, and it is the result of the maddening contrast of his respect for aesthetic limits with his disregard of moral limits.

At the 1986 World Fantasy Convention in Providence, Rhode Island, among the various things being given away were buttons promoting *Halloween*, Clive Barker's first movie, that read "THERE ARE NO LIMITS". More recently, in their rhetorical introduction to *Book of the Dead*, John Skipp and Craig Spector discussed the "progress" that can be made by "going too far":

There is always, as they say, the next frontier.

The function of the pioneer is to penetrate the unknown: to delve into those culturally uncharted places and report back on what they've found. All progress is based on the willingness of a few to venture into uncharted territory, check it out, come to terms with it, and make it a place where we all can dwell. . . .

If there is any hope for the future, it surely must rest upon the ability to stare unflinchingly into the heart of darkness.

Then set our sights on a better place.

And prepare ourselves.

To go too far.

This passage oozes male sexuality—implicitly equating the writing of overt, graphic horror with sexual intercourse—and Skipp and Spector seem to have a very American notion of progress. But these superficial characteristics distract us from the real thrust, as it were, of their argument. What they mean by limits, boundaries, taboos all address issues of content while remaining entirely mute on the issue of style.

Limits are not merely essential to horror, they are exciting. It is the existence of the edge of repression that allows the tale of terror to exist at all. It is rationality and physical law that give Edgar Allan Poe's "Descent into the Maelstrom" its effect. It is the tension between inside and outside that makes the house story.

The scariest movie I ever saw was *The Shining*. It is not the same as Stephen King's novel. The book is primarily psych metaphor horror, whereas the movie is nature-of-reality horror. And the movie is a careful study of limits. Kubrick repeatedly sets up implied limits: Only Danny can see the ghosts; Jack and Danny can see the ghosts, but Wendy can't; the whole family can see the ghosts, but the ghosts can't actually do anything—and then Grady the Ghost opens the food locker and lets crazy Jack out . . . the scariest moment in the movie, much more so than the axe murder, or the chase scenes, because of its implications, that every time we think something absolutely cannot happen, it does. The architecture of the Overlook Hotel and its grounds is crucial to a number of major scenes: to the food locker scene; to the most famous scene in the movie, when Jack chops through the door and then sticks in his head and says, "Here's Johnny!"; and to the scene in which Jack pursues Danny with an axe through the hedge maze. In fact, the concept of limits is crucial to the setup of the whole story: the family will be snowed out for the winter and will have to stay in the Overlook Hotel.

I saw the movie in 70 millimeter on a great big curved screen, sitting in the front row with my friend Kay. I had just come back from a year in Germany a few days earlier and was eighteen but looked about fourteen. I had not brought my purse, but brought along my passport for ID (I didn't have a driver's license) in case the ticket seller questioned whether or not I should be allowed into an R-rated movie. The pants I was wearing had only front pockets so I gave my passport to Kay to put in his back pocket for the duration of the movie.

After the movie was over and the credits were running over Jack's frozen, crazy grin, I walked to the end of the aisle with Kay and asked him for my passport back. I was feeling very smug. I knew that the passport had probably fallen out of his back pocket and was now sitting under his seat. I knew this because this had happened to me before. He felt his back pocket. My passport was gone. He looked under his seat. He found it. He handed it back to me. I felt very self-satisfied . . . until I was crossing my parents' front lawn and realized that I had never, ever kept my passport in my back pocket. Then the message of the movie came right out of the screen at me. *So you think it's just a movie? Haven't I been selling you all along that every time you think something can't happen, that you are wrong? I didn't sleep for the rest of the night. I kept myself facing away from the door to my room for fear of seeing two little*

girls in the doorway saying "Come play with us for ever and ever and ever . . ." and when I went to the bathroom during the night, I kept my head turned away from the bathtub, to avoid encounters with old ladies who've passed their sell-by date.

It took me a week to realize that I'd lost money out of my back pocket and that that's what I'd been thinking of. In a letter to Gene Wolfe, I told this story. He wrote back saying that the part about the money was just an after-the-fact rationalization. Being from a family where we explain such things, I have a ready explanation. But I suppose that from another perspective, it is simply impossible and that I should preserve it in all its beautiful impossibility.

There are many stories in this book that are impossible, that cannot have happened, stories of the fantastic, the supernatural: a story of a prehistoric subterranean intelligence, a fantastically altered America which bears a resemblance to Ancient Greece as portrayed in Greek mythology, a nine-hundred-year-old woman, and, of course, haunted houses. I have, above, defined horror fiction in relation to the emotion of horror. There is another useful definition of the genre we are attempting to know. Let us call it supernatural fiction instead of horror, and require that supernatural fiction involve an element of the supernatural: ghosts, witches, vampires, werewolves, zombies, mummies, the Frankenstein monster—the usual Halloween night crew. The difference between the supernatural and just plain fantasy is mostly tradition and partly a sense of the uncanny.

While in principle horror and fantasy are quite separable and distinct, at this historical moment, the cutting edge of fantasy is in horror and the cutting edge of horror is in fantasy. Most of us think we know what fantasy is. It comes in three volumes, it's got elves and dwarves and gnomes and unicorns in it. Usually a beautiful princess, and probably a teenage boy who starts out rather ordinary, but goes on a quest and through the quest discovers his true power and becomes King by the end of the third volume. As is evident from this rather familiar plot summary, over-production of fluffy fantasy novels has degraded many of the more cheerful forms of fantasy. And as the supernatural motifs become over-used, the best work in horror is increasingly being done in fantasy. Thus one will find in this horror anthology a disproportionate number of writers who are primarily known for their fantasy and science fiction. St. Martin's Press has recently begun publishing a combined volume of the year's best fantasy and horror which I think is appropriate, given the category overlap in the best work.

In his essay on "The Impossible," M. C. Escher discusses how he used rationality and limits to give his images plausibility. Then he introduces an element of the impossible to give his viewer a kind of shock, the same kind of shock, he claims, that the writers of fairy tales achieve. As I remarked in my essay "Escher in Elfland: Logic, Fantasy & Criticism," "The essence of fantasy is inextricably bound up in the oxymoronic linkage of logic and illogic, rationality and irrationality, the real and the unreal." And horror combined with fantasy potentially has much the same effect as Kubrick's version of *The Shining* did on me: It can cast doubt upon what we think we know about the world, undermine our smug confidence that we know how things are and that things will continue as they are.

Fantasy allows an author to take a reader by surprise in much the same way as real life does. Real-life horror can be sudden, so sudden and so major that the facts overwhelm the factive power of the media. Late at night on CNN, about six hours after the October 17th California earthquake, the anchorman updated the Bay area death toll, which was by then estimated to be in the hundreds, and then went to a commercial break. About three commercials in, there was an ad for Rice-a-Roni (remember "The San Francisco Treat"?) in which a potato dances with a box of Rice-a-Roni and sings "Stayin' Alive." At the end, a tiny cable car appears and rings its little bell. The sales pitch was that one can save the lives of poor innocent potatoes by eating Rice-a-Roni. But the architectural horrors of the night—the collapse of a one-mile section of I-880 and a piece of the Bay Bridge, the fire in the Marina District, the building collapses at the Santa Cruz Pacific Garden Mall—gave the Rice-a-Roni commercial a bizarre, macabre cast. The earthquake had changed the rules.

Richard A. Lupoff, whose story "The House on Rue Chetres" appears in this volume, was sitting at his word processor in Berkeley,

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not far from the Cypress section of I-880, at the time of the quake. He said that when the room began to shake, he thought that this one was just like the other hundred earthquakes he'd been through. But as the shaking got stronger, he realized that, in fact, this one was *welkie* like the other hundred. This one was bigger.

Nature has her limits, but we cannot set them for her. When the characters take off in a space ship, the ship is not supposed to explode in front of a hundred thousand school children. When the characters take a bus from Oakland to San Francisco, the upper deck of the freeway is not supposed to collapse on top of them. The drama of nature can easily, in seconds, exceed the excess of human melodrama. The fantastic allows us to recapture that element of surprise which reality has but the rules of realism forbid.

Landscape and architecture define so much of what we think we know. They take on a permanence and an inevitability which is both comforting and imprisoning. When they change unexpectedly, the change is both terrifying and liberating.

Last night the East Germans announced that they were going to loosen travel restrictions and opened the border with West Berlin. As I write this, CNN is running footage of people standing on and walking on the top of the Wall. And there is much discussion of tearing down the Wall—architectural alteration inevitably following political change and political dialogue conducted in architectural metaphor. Architecture is simultaneously the most personal and political of metaphors.

Castleview by Gene Wolfe

New York: Tor Books, 1990; \$18.95; 279 pp.

reviewed by John Clute

Each time it is different, and each time it is the same. As has been the case with all his books from *The Fifth Head of Cerberus* (1972) on, there is no such thing as a first reading of a Gene Wolfe novel, for at first there is only the Great Woods of the book, *Castleview* in this case, and unbuttoned explorers of the new Logos, Hansels and Gretels scribing for paths through rose and briar to the gingerbread house, dropping breadcrumbs in the scuttle of our trek, while around us the catnap and syllable of a tale is being told, which we hope to survive; because we're hoping for a second trip, a second reading, for a courtesy of briar and rose. That is the same as always. What is different in *Castleview* is, perhaps, almost everything else.

An autobiography of this reviewer's reading of the book may be of help. Having obtained a proof copy some months ago, I read about half the text in an initial spurt; from the first, the here and now of the book seemed unusually clear. *Castleview* was set in the late 1980s in a small fictional town itself called *Castleview*, taking its name from the fact that people round about tended to suffer from intermittent sightings, *fata morgana* visions of a strange romantic multi-turreted castle which seemed to shift position like a galleon, or perhaps Earth shifted into sight of it. But *Castleview* was located, uniquely for a Wolfe novel, in a place which one could find on a map—in northwestern Illinois, near the Mississippi River, on the road from nearby Galena (which is a real place) through Barrington (where Wolfe himself lives) to Chicago. So we could pinpoint the here (though not perhaps Morgan le Fay); and as for the now, we even knew the day: it is the day that the protagonist, Will E. Shields, new owner of a *Castleview* automobile dealership handling late 1980s cars, arrives in town with his family, looking for a house to buy. Halfway through the book, that day has not yet ended, and already much has begun to happen.

At the point that Will Shields has decided to buy a house, one not perhaps coincidentally prone to views of the legendary castle, all hell (or Faerie) breaks loose. The owner of that house has already been mysteriously killed by a blow to the head, and now citizens and visitors from Faerie—like outriders of the Other—begin to proliferate (the book, as a whole, has more than 50 named characters in performing roles) and to intermingle; a Cherokee jeep owned by Will's dealership shows signs of taking on the aspect of a great charger; and the invaders, including a long-dead inhabitant of *Castleview*, begin to rattle trancingly the Great Wood. I was attempting to penetrate with the breadcrumbs and flint of my first reading. Clearly they are looking for something (perhaps Arthur). But the first half of *Castleview* is like a Crazy Comedy from the 1930s, cocooned in slapstick, a dozen farces

By consenting to write a house story, the authors in this book are submitting themselves to an inherently psychological process—even more so than the simple act of writing fiction, because houses directly address issues of identity. I'm told that there is a psychological test in which the subject is asked to draw a house and then talk about it. Thus, writing a house story makes the author confront the problem of what to expose and what to conceal about themselves. So because they are house stories, all the stories in this book are to some extent psychological.

Both Sharon Baker and Karl Edward Wagner set their stories in the houses they grew up in. And a number of the other stories are set in buildings that really exist: Richard A. Lupoff's, Susan Palwick's, Gary Kilworth's, Ian Watson's, Edward Bryant's. The reality of the buildings portrayed seems to deny their psychological meaning. But the very essence of the house story is the balance between the literal and the metaphorical. The very literalness of these houses hints at their metaphorical nature. Have these authors "recognized their houses"? Or have they recognized some other metaphorical truth? The issue of psychology is inescapable. Houses are inescapable. ▴

This article will appear in slightly different form as the introduction to Walls of Fear, edited by Kathryn Cramer, forthcoming from William Morrow & Co. in September, 1990.

heaped upon Ossia; and in this congeries of antic scenes and tumbling glimpes no single rallying clue (like the elm tree in *Peace*) can easily be found. No sooner does a scene begin to subject to a climax any member of the case—Will, or his family, or the widow of the man whose house he wished to buy, or any of a dozen other significant actors—than the curtain whips down, and a new conjunction of players—like reconfigured chips in a kaleidoscope—begins to dance and fret. But it was here, for reasons extrinsic to the book, I came to a halt.

That was the "first" read.

As usual, I found myself speaking to others about this initial or courtship stage of reading Wolfe; and as usual there was someone (in this case, Neil Gaiman) who had gained a sense of the route inside.

—The problem with *Castleview* of course (he said) is that there are too many *Arrivers*.

—You mean (I said, less quickly than this) that the book is not about finding Arthur, but about enlisting one.

—Right. You remember, for instance, in the *Morte D'Arthur*, the kind of wound the King receives at the end?

—No.

—A great blow to the head.

—So.

—So how many men receive head wounds in *Castleview*?

—Three? Five? Seven?

So it goes.

Castleview is a tale of recruitment. The time for an expiatory final battle is once again nigh, and Morgan le Fay must find a hero to oppose. She must find one who will take up with chivalrous abandon the immortal role. It must be her brother, the once and future King. From the moment that Will E. Shields—whose wife at one point addresses him as "Indiana," in what must be a reference to the compulsively gallant Indiana Jones—arrives in the small city of *Castleview*, and finds himself immediately tossed into a veriginous kaleidoscope of sights and happenings and sounds and ghosts on, it seems (in retrospect) clear that he may be the most fitting Arthur, and that his arrival in itself may have signaled the beginning of the transformative invasion of *Castleview* by indwellers of the other world in search of him in particular, or perhaps it is simply the case that the time has come for a renewal of the great conflict between Arthur and his foes, and Will only happens to be on the scene. This may not matter much; over the next 24 hours (which take up the great bulk of the book) Morgan le Fay and her breed ransack *Castleview* for the Arthur of their great need. The one *Castleview* native who might seem an ideal choice, Arthur (Wrangler)

Dunstan, has been too severely wounded and bled to lift the sword; nor does he exhibit the unquestioning chivalrousness of Shields, who seems, in retrospect, always to have been fated for enlistment. Who can say? As in a great game of musical chairs, scene after scene has evicted character after character from the raptorial of the kaleidoscope. Was it fated that Shields would keep his seat? Or was it the luck of the tune that beats the world (and stops, and you are dead)? In any case, the land of Faerie pulls more and more savagely at the tranced survivors, and more and more of the cast find themselves (like Hansel, or Gretel) tracing dream-like passages through the maze of conjunction between the two worlds. It is like a drawing of blood. The end is nigh.

There have been references throughout *Castleview* (as Neil Gaiman also mentioned) to the tale of Puss in Boots. The name of one of the girls at the nearby summer camp is Lucie d'Carabas, which is the name Puss gives to his master, who on becoming d'Carabas becomes as much an impostor as any Will Shields donning the accoutrements of Arthur; the surname of the maternal grandmother of a *Castleview* family long central to the impositions of Faerie is Chatter; and late in the novel, deep within the topological infirmities of the haunted and chronic Wild-Hunt world of Faerie, appears a cat who walks on two legs, perhaps rather unfortunately named J. Gordon Kitty. In a tale of enlistment, and perhaps of concealed ambition, he is an ideal guiding fairy—and it might be noted that in the original tale of Puss in Boots (circa 1550), Giovanni Straparola fails to mention Boots, but does say that the cat in question is a fairy in disguise. Subtly fermented by the dextrous Puss, events soon reach a populous climax. There is a battle,

and a sacrifice, and benthic repose, and the two worlds disentangle.

It is, in other words, over in a flash. *Castleview* has been a very sudden book. The style is that of *Free Live Free* (1984) or *There Are Doors* (1988), unadorned (except for the deep intrinsicated metaphor-delving passages which describe the crossing of a young girl into the Fey castle), measured and measuring (with characters constantly orienting themselves in rooms and corridors and time), haunted by proximity to the thing described. But in neither of these previous novels whose folk dance gingerly through Mage-designed worlds in search of their hearts' desire does Wolfe so closely approach as he does in *Castleview* to the style and Marter of G. K. Chesterton. *Castleview* may be the finest and most lucid Catholic dream allegory Wolfe has yet written, and its clear and burning affinity with *The Man Who Was Thursday: A Nightmare* (1908), which is also a novel of enlistment, and a tale of masks, may be entirely deliberate on his part. Of course it is God who is the final recruiter in that book, the final Sunday within a week of impostors, and *Castleview* must seem to represent a pre-Christian Conclave and Calling. But both books share a hallucinated lucidity of telling, and onrushing deadpan obedience to the potency of the bare word. And both glow with an artfulness of giving, for neither *Castleview* nor *The Man Who Was Thursday* are, in any real sense, fully autonomous works of art. They are both of them gifts. They are table settings.

Each of them calls upon a Lord to dine. ▴

John Clute lives in London, England. His essays and reviews were collected most recently in Seroties.

Paul Williams from *Rock and Roll: The 100 Best Singles*

Chuck Berry "Johnny B. Goode"

History is still the enemy, and the danger is that if we talk about the pivotal role this record played in the ultimate triumph of the electric guitar as the symbol of rock music, talk about how more than any other this performance established the *sound* of the rock and roll guitar (as taught by Chuck's apostles: Carl, George, Keith, Jimi, Jimmy, et al.), talk even about the delightful fact that *Voyager 1* is currently heading for the stars with a copy of "Johnny B. Goode" included in its two-hour recorded message in a bottle for whatever intelligent critters it may encounter, if we do any of this stuff, we risk further enshrining the song in its rock-and-roll-hall-of-fame, golden oldie, "classic rock" glass case, missing the one essential fact, which is that this record has something to offer far more important than its famous past or its imagined future—it exists now, a living presence in your ears, alive and available to be interacted with, to recreate itself by your phonograph, radio, boom box, CD player, a sound, a song, a human voice accompanied by slightly more-than-human musicians, the definition of a great record, an experience as rare and ordinary and rewarding as the sunrise, ladies and gentlemen, from deep down in Louisiana close to New Orleans, rock and roll's finest single fictional creation, Mister Johnny B. Goode.

Don't ask him any questions. Just listen.

The first thing you hear is six seconds of solo lead guitar (one drumbeat right in the middle), a repeating riff a little like the sound of the statter motor on a car, boom the drum signifies the engine kicking in, oh that feeling of power to go from stillness to mobility with a twist of the wrist and a push of the foot, riding the guitar chord, here we go, and the second thing you hear is the rest of the intro, full band (piano, bass, drums) and guitar rocking back and forth, building up potential energy, ready to explode, and then the vocal starts, zoom, steady acceleration, we're roaring down the road now, lyrics flowing like pure poetry ("never ever learned to read or write so well"), voice fierce relaxed free and gleeful, the verse being movement three and then it moves right into four, that

incredible chorus, everything in the song so far has prepared you for this and yet nothing could prepare you for the way you find yourself reacting as Chuck sings, "Go! Go, Johnny, go!" and answers himself on the guitar, you're in the audience, you can see the kid playing, you're jumping out of your chair and hollering out "Go!" along with the singer, you and the stranger in front of you have your arms around each other and you're boogieing, sweat pouring down your brow, but the band won't let up, piano raving away behind everything, and now they're into the second verse and chorus, movements three and four over again, erupting finally into a sequence almost too complex and too intense to keep track of, piano explodes for a second and then the guitar solo, the kid cutting loose, so assertive, so easy and powerful, clearly the announcement of some kind of new era, guitar then joined by piano and rhythm section, they're waiting together and reach a joyous climax and just when you think the third verse is about to start, look out, here comes another guitar solo and this time you're just totally lost, you become the guitar player, the country boy, grinning as the lightning dances out the ends of your fingers in time with the beat, totally liberated, the band comes in with a reprise of movement one, the third verse starts and you are Johnny B. Goode, and you're still the audience, and you're also somebody listening to this singer sing about the legendary musician and his audience, and it's just wonderful . . . If you actually listen to the words of the song, Johnny isn't a legend yet, may not even have a band yet except in his own imagination, he's fantasizing this just like we are ("strumming with the rhythm that the drivers made"). The "trunk and roller, then, is not Johnny on stage but Johnny under a tree dreaming about being on stage, and the fire of that dream is what he takes with him to share when his moment does come. The sound of the guitar like the feeling of a car when you're joyriding it down the highway: listen, space critters, *this* is who we are. ▴

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Modernism, Postmodernism, Science Fiction

Continued from page 1

nition and estrangement, in such clear and apparent forms, were the necessary and/or sufficient conditions for science fiction. It was as self-evident as the fact that sf writers should strive to keep their fictions up to the real . . .

Recently the immensely talented sf writer Kim Stanley Robinson, beginning with a fine essay by his one-time teacher, Marxist critic Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" (*The New Left Review*, No. 3, 1984) has tabulated the aspects by which Jameson has characterized postmodernist art and drawn the (again, practically self-evident) conclusion that science fiction, especially in its most contemporary form, must be the postmodernist art that postmodernism at its healthiest seems to be calling for.

Let me work my way through Jameson's essay and Robinson's response to it in a bit more detail:

1) Jameson: Postmodernist art is that which develops after some sort of *coupure* (or rupture) in the late fifties or sixties. Robinson: While, with most literature, this rupture is pretty much a matter of hindsight and, in historical terms, a notoriously hard occurrence to pin down, in sf, certainly that rupture would have been the famous (or infamous) New Wave, whose ripples began to leave their effect throughout the sea of science fiction production from 1965 through '69 or '70.

2) Jameson: Postmodernism develops in response to a populist esthetic. In the course of it, it breaks down the boundary between high art and low art. Robinson: Well, sf originated in the pulp magazines and has grown up in pulp digests and paperbacks. The added esthetic richness characteristic of post-New Wave sf seems simply to have lain in wait for Jameson's observation equally as much as the constant and continuous appropriation of sf imagery and rhetoric by literary writers from Pynchon, Pierce, and Hoban to Atwood, McElroy, Brooke-Rose, and LeSauter.

3) Jameson: Modernist art is rich in layers of social meaning, offering itself to a range of hermeneutic and interpretive responses. An example here is Van Gogh's painting "Peasant Shoes" with its apparent existence between the soil and the world, its commentary on peasant life, and even Van Gogh's suggestion of a utopian moment in the glorious riot of color fragmentation by which he represents them. Postmodernist art, while its surface tends to be glib and dazzling, nevertheless resists those rich, deep, and deeply unraveled readings. A comparable example of postmodernism would be the slick, unyielding surface of Warhol's "Diamond-Dust Shoes." (SRD: At this point, I would argue that there is a skew to Jameson's argument: "Diamond-Dust Shoes" is just as open to being "read" as "Peasant Shoes"; but [sic] we have to make the reading general and historical, and [two] we can have almost no recourse to the notion of auctorial intention in that reading, even if Warhol could have—and I suspect he could—produced the same reading himself. In short, we have a postmodernist set of interpretive circuits that do not necessarily privilege the same set of concepts—the author, topical/historical/stylistic unity, and the social-as-a-direct-effect-of-labor [rather than the social as an indirect effect of commodification]—implicitly privileged in the more familiar interpretive circuits of modernism.) Robinson: the styles of a Zelazny, a Varley, or a Gibson are full of surface glitter; as well, they resist a modernist reading (and are amenable to precisely the postmodernist reading strategies)—even more so than do the New Wave texts, the weakest of which, on looking back, seem to have been trying so hard just to keep up. The Zelaznys, the Gibsons, and the Varleys are the texts which, when we look at them closely, seem to be indulging in some form of pastiche (now of detective fictions, now of earlier modes of sf)—which Jameson cites as the postmodernist form which, through an appropriation of complex nostalgia, has eclipsed parody.

This turn to pastiche, along with the information explosion (which, Jameson suggests, has shattered the "signifying chain" of a more focused and unified culture), signals the possibility/necessity of a new sort of art enterprise in response to multi-national capitalism (the capitalism described endlessly, suggests Robinson, by cyberpunk writers and, indeed, by their often more talented non-cyberpunk contemporaries)—just as (Jameson explains, following Ernest Mandel), realism was a response to early industrial capitalism (better known as

Imperialism). Well, argues Robinson, if you're looking for the new, postmodernist art, clearly it's already emerged.

What is it?

Well, it's as self-evident as where the need to keep one's fictions up to the real is really focused, or where the force of cognition and estrangement are really at work . . .

But as we look at Robinson's borrowing of Jameson's critique, put to a self-evident science fictional use, we have to note that the critical apparatus for science fiction has always been borrowed—a borrowing that has been going on (with much the same, familiar results) for years. Such venerable phrases in the history of sf criticism, like "sense of wonder" and "the literature of ideas," all began on the other (and more respectable) side of the literary/paraliterary tracks. The former was most likely lifted in the forties by left-sympathizing sf critic Damon Knight from the twenty-fifth stanza of poet W. H. Auden's elegy, "In Memory of Sigmund Freud" (1939). The latter was most probably appropriated by critic and sf writer James Blish from the twenty-fifth chapter of Balzac's novel *Lost Illusions*, where it is contrasted with "The Literature of Imagery"—though I am sure that Blish felt, as did Robinson, Suvin, and Knight, "This 'Literature of Ideas' Balzac is describing has really *gone* to be about science fiction . . ."

Even the mania for definition that plagues science fiction today is borrowed—from the thirties and forties, when American leftist critics, in hope of putting literary criticism itself on a more "scientific" footing, were trying to define all the genres, from novel to poem to tragedy. As leftists, these American critics (unlike their European counterparts, who tended, rather, to condemn the whole of the "Popular Culture Industry") were particularly interested in popular genres. Thus *sf* seemed a particularly good one to try to define.

Eventually, the formal study of these literary genres vouchsafed in the American academy declared the job, on logical (i.e., scientific) grounds, simply undable: Formal genres, to the extent that they exist as a set of socially-shared interpretive codes, belong to a category of object ("social objects") that resist formal definition (i.e., resist yielding up their necessary and sufficient conditions)—a stronger argument in the long run than simply declaring the job (the hidden academic agenda, after all) simply un-American. But the paraliterary genre of sf, without much sense of its contextual history, and without a formal academic history to stabilize a general knowledge of the provenance of the ideas that control it, still gives the question, "How do you define 'science fiction'?" almost as much currency today as it does to the endless repeated question to the sf writer, "Where do you get your ideas?"

The fact that our critics tend to overlook is that science fiction exists in a certain *resonance* with literature, and has, since literature as we know it was constituted by academization shortly after World War One—and science fiction as we know it was constituted a decade later, in the pulp magazines of the middle- and late-twenties. Both of them were distinct reactions to the spread of urbanism and popular literacy. But one was controlled, responsible, and overseen by trained literary executives. The other was populist, irresponsible, and uncontrolled by anything save commercial pressures—and a highly articulate readership enthusiasm (that grew into present day " fandom"). I hope you can hear in my characterization the judgment of sf leveled, at least till the sixties, by a good portion of the literary overseas: sf was specifically dangerous to any sense of intellect (it fostered misinformation) and responsibility (it was escapist).

Jameson (like Riedler before him) is as sympathetic to science fiction as any major, contemporary critic we have. And there is much more of interest in his essay than I have pulled out for this schematic comparison (as there is much more in Robinson's argument that warrants careful attention). Nevertheless, when Jameson writes, as he does on page 62 of his essay, of "the effacement . . . of the older (essentially high-modernist) frontier between high culture and so-called mass or commercial culture, and the emergence of new kinds of text infused with the forms, categories and contents of that very Culture Industry so passionately denounced by the ideologues of the modern, from Leavis and the American New Criticism all the way to Adorno and the Frankfurt School . . ." regardless of his intentions as a writer, the discourse (i.e., the response, the reasoning, the codes—politically conscious and unconscious—of interpretation) into which he intro-

duces such and like phrases will largely read him as referring to an effacement totally initiated, overseen, and policed by the practitioners of High Culture—as will be the texts so produced.

Lurking in Robinson's analysis is the uncritical assumption that an effacement initiated, overseen, and practiced from the side of some popular cultural form (such as science fiction) will be read, by the discourse of "High Culture," as somehow the same historical object as the literarily initiated effacement Jameson writes of. This is simply naïve. The appropriations from High Culture by popular culture are read (by the discourse of High Culture) as trivial, beneath notice, totally illegitimate, and wholly contaminated—not by origin, but by destination. That discourse reads the explanatory thrust of Robinson's critical borrowings from Jameson's fundamentally literary theory (as it reads Knight's, or Blith's, or Suvin's, or the fan who comes up and asks "What's your definition of it?") in the same way as it reads the borrowings of the sf artist from the gallery of "literary" techniques: i.e., as a fundamentally legitimating move that is finally disallowed as trivial, if not invisible, by virtue of its paralytic destination.

(For a suggestion of how things might work differently, consider the way in which the discourse of High Musical Culture has responded to popular music's many, many appropriations from it.)

Now the underlying fact is, of course, that discourses, like genres themselves, never arrive pure. To make my argument, I have had to hypostatize a solidity, a groundedness, and a fundamental aggression within such ideas as "science fiction," "literature," "criticism," "High Culture," "popular culture," and even, *paras*, "discourse" that, fortunately, none of them actually possess. (Such aspects are, themselves, discursive effects: attractors functioning outside the discourse, not impellers situated within it.) And the tensions I've been describing are changing. It is these changes that make it necessary to articulate this form of this (admittedly hypostatized) argument in such violent terms. A careful rhetorical analysis of precisely the texts on which I'm basing my argument would reveal much about those changes: Jameson in no way excludes "science fiction" from his discussion. He uses the term a number of times in his essay; and a careful reading of where he does and where he doesn't would probably be far more instructive in the long run than this essay. Nor is Robinson, overall, anywhere near as naïve as my reading of his might first suggest.

Nevertheless, I feel there is a deeper discursive split at work here. At one point, where Jameson is discussing the shift from the modernist notion of the "alienation of the subject" (a Bad Thing to be cured either by Marxist readjustments of the social or by Freudian—or post-Freudian—reconfigurations of the self) to the postmodernist notion of the "fragmentation of the subject" (a Neutral Fact that has to be taken into consideration by any ideological psychoanalytic or social

program), he notes that both are reflected in the notion of "the death of the subject." He writes, in parentheses:

(Of the two possible formulations of the notion—the historicist one, that a once-existing central subject, in this period of classical capitalism and the nuclear family, has today in the world of organizational bureaucracy dissolved; and the more radical poststructuralist position for which such a subject never existed in the first place but constituted something like an ideological mirage—I obviously incline toward the former; the latter must in any case take into account something like a 'reality of the appearance.') (p. 63)

This inclination produces a rhetorical clinamen (that is, a leaning), apparent here and there throughout Jameson's brilliant and indispensable essay—a clinamen that, certainly, would be the topic of a more scholarly version of this discussion. (As far as I know, Robinson's brilliant and inescapable analysis of it has only been presented now and again as an informal lecture—which, I hope, will explain, if not excuse, my inescapable distortions of it.)

The point is, of course, that I incline the other way. Moreover, I think that any time when there was such a notion of a centered subject, especially when related to the white, western, patriarchal Nuclear family, not only was it an ideological mirage, it was a mirage that necessarily grew up to mask the psychological, economic, and material oppression of an "other"—often (though not necessarily) a tyrannized member of the same family. ("We are centered and healthy: she/he/it/they are not . . .") And I feel that the times and places where the "fragmented subject" is at its healthiest, happiest, and most creative is precisely at those times where society and economics contrive (1) to make questions of unity and centeredness irrelevant and (2) to distance that subject as much as possible from such oppressions.

While not every science fiction writer agrees with me, I see much in the rhetoric of contemporary science fiction suggesting this analysis: much in the sf field inclines to support it. The resistance to (and the acceptance of) such notions by the dominant literary discourse of our times, with what is finally, in real terms, its extremely ambiguous sense between an hypostatized modernism and an hypostatized postmodernism, is what really controls the current acceptance of (or the resistance to) most contemporary science fiction by various literary interpretive circuits—academic or otherwise. ▴

Excerpted from an "Afterword" to a forthcoming edition of *Delany's Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand* from *Bantam Books*

Good Omens [The Nice and Accurate Prophecies of Agnes Nutter, Witch] by Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett

Workman: New York, September 1990; \$18.95 hc; 354 pages

reviewed by Larry Niven

I whooped when this came in. I laugh a lot when I read Terry Pratchett. I know of Neil Gaiman, too: I've been reading *Sandman* (graphic novel).

You need to set your willing suspension of disbelief wide open for this one. It's fantasy. One needs to keep one's eye on three nearly identical babies designated A, B, and the *Adversary*, *Destroyer of Kings*, *Angel of the Bottomless Pit* . . . anyway, the Antichrist. He's eleven and a half through most of the book, which also includes the Four Horsemen, angels, devils, and the sole remaining copy of a book of uncannily accurate predictions by the burned witch Agnes Nutter.

I laughed a lot throughout. Every so often the book would blindside me:

Adam Young has no aura. This puzzles the nineteen-year-old witch Anathema greatly. Everyone's got one. . . . the color told you things about their health and general well-being. . . . expansive and creative people might have one extending several inches from the body

A page later, this:

It may, or may not, have helped Anathema get a clear view of things if she'd been allowed to spot the very obvious reason why she couldn't see Adam's aura.

It was for the same reason that people in Trafalgar Square can't see England.

Death is their best bit character . . . as is normal for Pratchett; but this Death is Azrael, more daunting than the Discworld Death. Still, I was in near-hysterics waiting for a biker to realize who these four in the Hell's Angels jackets are. He peers into Death's motorcycle helmet—

"Ere, I see you before," he said. "You were on the cover of that Blue Oyster Cult album. An' I got a ring wif your . . . your . . . your head on it."

"I GET EVERYWHERE," Death answers. ▴

David E. Myers
The Clarion Paradigm: A Scarecrow

Richard Grant, in "The Exile's Paradigm" (*Science Fiction Eye*, February, 1990, p. 51), toasts to the demise of the Clarion Credo and suggests that the principles of this "orthodox theory of science fiction" inhibit high quality writing and exclude the genre from the mainstream of literature. Grant says that we should strive toward a more lofty standard or paradigm, that we should "write with the same breadth of vision, the same depth of experience, or the same confidence and invigorating mastery of prose as our peers in the other fields."

Grant's ultimate goal is fine. However, he is mistaken in suggesting that the principles of the Clarion Credo hinder fine literature. And is perpetuating a false myth by subsuming these principles under the Clarion name.

The label "Clarion Credo" implies that its fundamental principles reflect substantially what is taught at the Clarion Writers' Workshops. They do not. Grant's sword cuts deeply into the Clarion Credo, but he is attacking a straw man.

"Clarion Credo" rolls off your tongue so easily that you almost believe in it, the way a shaman believes that if you name it, you gain power over it. It has all of the trademarks of a Really Good Definition: an itemized list of axioms, supporters and detractors in print, an historical basis in the Clarion and Milford Writers' Workshops.

But the principles enumerated under "Clarion Credo" do not sum up my experience as a student at the Clarion West Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers' Workshop in 1987, or as one of the workshop's administrators in subsequent years. I look back at my notes from these classes, and indeed, found the five principles of the Credo: well-rounded characterization, communicating through clear sentence structure, conflict, ideas supported by strong internal logic, and creating a fictional world. I also found passing mention of Grant's Ninth Grade Basic Tools of Literary Criticism: Character, Plot, Setting, Style, and Theme. I also found scattered sections on foreshadowing, dialogue, point of view, editors, suspense, comedy, beginnings, endings, manuscripts, tension, transitions, careers, creativity, scenes, story invention, agents, revision, language, contracts, exposition, story construction, narrative, verisimilitude, props and much more.

But I found all this other stuff, too:

Ursula Le Guin told us writing is freedom, exploration, opening, creation, innovation, taking risks, acting revolutionary, seeking new ideas, turning things over; writing is an instrument that we should play as well as possible; writing is a collaboration with the reader; writing is art, art is power and will affect, and therefore we as writers have a moral responsibility to our writing.

Greg Bear said to read the masters and the classics, to aspire for the highest, not for something reasonable; to never be aware of your limitations. He discussed how Proust used music to give *Swan's* Way a structure beyond plot, and how "good literature constantly feeds subliminal protein to the reader."

Lucius Shepard said, "Above all as a writer it's important not only to do the things that one naturally does well, it's incumbent upon you that once you do something well to move on from there, and try to expand your range."

These artistic notions don't fit comfortably into the straw "Clarion Credo" as defined by Grant, yet they were taught at Clarion West each of the last three years. They are the very things that Grant holds in highest regard.

The true Clarion Paradigm is not at odds with Grant's standard of literary excellence. Art, Ursula Le Guin told us, comes from feelings—the Straw Man has a heart.

The Straw Man Also Has a Brain

"Clarion Paradigm" suggests that there really is this thinking, feeling Scarecrow out in the Science Fiction corn field, waving its arms about as the crows trill at its face. So let's define it: The Clarion Paradigm subsumes all of the principles of the Clarion Credo and Grant's Ninth Grade Basic Tools of Literary Criticism and Everything

Else That Gets Taught at the Workshop and Anything Else That Pops Up Later ad infinitum.

The definition that contains everything is no definition at all, but that's what being a Straw Man is all about. The "Clarion Paradigm" is not a true paradigm or model—it is a Straw Man in which each straw is an idea concerning writing and storytelling. We may stuff the Straw Man with as many ideas as exist in the world. Let's for the moment call this particular Scarecrow the "Clarion Paradigm," then quit misusing the Clarion name.

None of the instructors at Clarion West arrive and say, "this is the Clarion Credo, this is the way storytelling is done." Instead, Ed Bryant said something like, "Write so you feel the emotions down on the lizard level."

No one at Clarion West says, "You *must* have a snappy opening which grabs the reader on the first page, you *must* cut to the chase, you *must* end with a kicker that makes the story resonate." But these clever tricks get mentioned, possibly within the context of a discussion of the genre's homogenization.

Nobody at Clarion West says, "Here's the short road to publication." And yet the students leave with a road map. The Interstates which provide the fastest routes to the cities of Mediocre Fiction and Genre Crap are not highlighted in yellow, as Grant implies, and students are urged to find a scenic route and even travel the backcountry to get there.

Clarion does not turn amateurs into professionals. It simply provides access to the tools—not *rules*, not a Credo, but *tools*—of the trade.

How does this information get communicated? At Clarion West, there are no texts, no syllabus, no lesson plan. Topics discussed in critiquing sessions arise out of the students' short stories, which are eclectic in content and style. There is a different instructor each of the six weeks, and they don't get together ahead of time to plan it all out. Even when they have a pretty good idea of what's been going on at the workshop before they arrived in town, they are never told, "Say, how about covering characterization and conflict while you're here?" Nevertheless, characterization and conflict get covered.

In 1989 at Clarion West, Karen Joy Fowler said this about the voice of your characters: See the world in the context of your character's own history and experience. Show how it looks to them, in terms relevant to them. Experience the story. You can't just write it. Feel it, smell it. Keep that intensity throughout the story. Your key to quality literature is specificity of detail. The only real rule in writing is you have to make it work.

The next week Connie Willis added: Suck your reader into the story with characters whose traits and histories intersect with the reader's life. Give the reader details and incidents with which they can identify. Get the reader involved with the rising action and tension.

Then Lucius Shepard said, "A long descriptive paragraph should be in itself a story, it should have a dynamic passage, and a rhythm, which consists of short and detailed kinds of perceptions, bursts of perceptions, with longer sentences that sum them up in images, and the whole passage of the paragraph should be a movement, it should have a music to it, just like a story. The way the character of the person who's seeing them, with their mood."

On the last day of class, Roger Zelazny offered this advice, derived from martial arts philosophy: Once you've learned it, forget it. Let your body show how to do it. Forget the techniques, just sit down and write the story. Don't kill the spontaneity. Trust yourself.

The Clarion Paradigm disappears into the corn field, and thus relieved of the Paradigm's intellectual constraints, the eclectic Scarecrow sits down to write some science fiction.

Can the Scarecrow be Reduced to Mere Straw?

Grant (p. 45) writes, "Let us first reject reductionism, the notion that one can understand a work of fiction by taking it apart and scrutinizing its components." Grant tosses out the Clarion Credo in a

manner akin to throwing out the baby with the bath water, except in this case the bath water isn't even dirty. I agree that we cannot reduce great literature to mere words and language any more than we can reduce Beethoven to mere notes. But does that mean a writer cannot use character and conflict and style the way Beethoven used melody and movement and song? No, it does not.

Grant is confusing reductionism as a *philosophy*—the dogmatic belief that everything may be reduced to an ultimate, irreducible, fundamental explanation, and that nothing intrinsically new enters at higher levels of organization—with reductionism as a *method*—a way to ask questions about how the universe functions, to generate research problems, to explain results. The philosopher, Karl Popper, suggests that the former may be rejected but not the latter, because reductionism as a method has been a success in science, even in its failures (e.g., in the way quantum theory arose from mechanistic physics).

Moreover, in rejecting reductionism Grant ignores the other side of the coin, *emergentism*—the principle that at higher levels of organization, new fundamental hypotheses and concepts arise which are not derivable from those of lower levels. These philosophical ideas complement each other and you can no more disregard one in favor of the other than you can scrape Lincoln's head off a penny and say you've designed a better coin. It is ironic that Grant choose John Crowley's *Little, Big* to exemplify the failure of the reductionistic Clarion Credo, as that title (and perhaps even a theme [gasp] of that book) reflects the idea that wherever we gain understanding of the world by reducing it to little things, we may also gain insight from the big things that emerge at a higher level.

"Something" emerges when we read fine literature. We know it and feel it. "Something" jumps out as unique, suprising, enlightening, creative or novel. It stimulates us on an intellectual and emotional level. It makes us respond, psychologically or even physiologically. We are moved. We want to turn the pages. We are drawn into the events of what John Gardner calls the vivid and continuous fictional dream. We react. Our hearts beat faster. We invest more of ourselves and our efforts are rewarded. We think about important issues. We don't want it to end, we want to go back and read it again, not just for the original thrill, but for all the things we missed.

Grant believes that his New Theory of Fiction handles great literature better than the principles of the Clarion Credo, and therefore we should toast to the demise of the old ideas. Even if Grant can sketch the blueprints for a better mousetrap, that is no reason to forget the wood and metal and cheese that made the old model work so well.

If "something" emerges from great literature which lies beyond the scope of the principles of the Clarion Credo, that emergence does not negate those fundamentals, rather it supplements them. The fallacy in Grant's logic suggests that after we've cast away reductionism and the Clarion Credo, we should also throw away our ninth grade teaching on the basics of story construction, our seventh grade rules of grammar, our third grade words, sentences, paragraphs and punctuation, our preschool knowledge of language and our ability to speak and listen to people. Such a fictitious exercise does not produce *Art* or *Beauty* or *illuminate* *How Life Feels*, but instead results in a lobotomized Straw Man with a frantically beating heart.

What makes great literature great is that it functions as an especially salient stimulus to us, and elicits a powerful response. As writers or readers, do the principles of the Clarion Credo somehow block us from this? No.

Let's examine what Grant (p. 50) calls "the Clarion Credo at its feeblest . . . clear sentence structure . . . absolutely the lowest conceivable ambition that a prose writer can sustain without giving up altogether and becoming a used car salesman." Clear sentences and writing to communicate are "the stuff of mediocrity." This is Grant lashing out at a straw man.

Samuel R. Delany discussed sentences at Clarion West: the good sentence says something, economically, simply, and clearly. Don't be ambiguous. Pare sentences down until ornament and intensity emerge. Simplify and compress. Complexity arises from vivid imagery. If it's important to the story, make it clear and emphasize it. Write sentences carefully—if they don't say what you want to say, then they will say what you *don't* want to say.

What is Grant's New and Better Theory of Fiction? Writers should



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write well! Writing is not communication! Clear sentences suck! We are what we read! The whole of a sentence is greater than the sum of its parts! The essence of a novel is its total effect on the reader! Artistic Reality is not really real! Bring back the classics!

I don't know. And when someone promises me a Theory of Fiction, I don't want to feel its ethereal wings glance across my cheek. I want to be slapped in the face with it.

Writing and reading are learned behaviors and therefore obey the psychological laws that govern all learned behaviors. Any work of fiction, great or mundane, may be analyzed in terms of the writer's intended psychological effect on the reader. Through the medium of literature, the story's imagined events interact with our memories, expectations, beliefs, and concerns—with our conscious experience. If this internal stimulus context is highly discriminable and intellectually or emotionally significant, then we will pay attention, remember and respond to the story as great literature.

We learn to write and tell stories by reading fine literature, by experiencing life, and by practice, practice, practice. Some of us learn principles of writing and storytelling at the Clarion Writers' Workshops.

I learned from Chip Delany at Clarion West that the single effect of a story is a combination of many effects.

When you fill up clothes with enough straw, a Scarecrow emerges in the corn field. And from the Scarecrow, stories emerge.

Why Does the Scarecrow Write?

Grant (p. 41) states that the Clarion Credo is a method that "addresses itself to the question of *how* to write, without addressing the more fundamental question of *why* to write."

I agree that the Clarion Paradigm is a method. Just as science is a method—a way to look at the world and gain knowledge—the Clarion Paradigm is a way to look at writing and storytelling to discover *how* it works. That is fundamental.

The Clarion Paradigm—the Scarecrow—rarely asks "Why write?" just as I rarely ask myself "Why do I exist?" It's not that I'm uninterested in the answers on every level of analysis—spiritual, moral, artistic, biological, physical—all the way back to the Big Bang. But the question of life is not simply *why* it exists, but *how* it exists, how to keep it going and make it better, how life expresses itself. If the Scarecrow has one fundamental goal, it is to discover everything about *how* to write the Story. *Why* to write the Story, like art, emerges along the way more as a function of *who* we are.

"Why write?" Someone asked Ursula Le Guin a similar question at Clarion West. Part of her answer: It's what I do. Writing is a joy, it is a way of living.

The Clarion Paradigm as a method is not bound by any particular theoretical position on writing. The Clarion Paradigm does not insist that we write on either end of the continuum between escapist or interpretive literature. The Clarion Paradigm is not a philosophy that Clarion students decode from the Latin when they receive their secret decoder rings. Art, and great literature, are neither demanded nor precluded by the Clarion Paradigm.

The principles of the Clarion Credo are not dogmatic laws which must be obeyed on penalty of critical or editorial rejection, but they are laws in the sense that they provide us with guidance and an understanding of fiction.

Grant argues that the Clarion Credo obligates us to mediocre writing. He does not see the Clarion Paradigm—the Scarecrow—behind the Credo's straw man.

The Clarion Paradigm does not inhibit literary achievement any more than a scarecrow can prevent a three-hundred-pound crow from eating whatever corn it wants.

But that, as Roger Zelazny said, is another story.

The Story of the Scarecrow


There are multiple dimensions that define the "Clarion Paradigm." So many, in fact, that it becomes a Straw Man in essence—more appearance than substance, more a name than a reality—yet, this Straw Man behaves like a real Scarecrow. We see five or ten or twenty

particulars that seem especially important to writing and analyzing fiction, and these form the Scarecrow's ears, face, eyes, arms and legs. We see floating like straw on the wind an infinite number of eclectic ideas which the Scarecrow grabs and crams into its hungry mouth. We realize that these straws feed its brain and heart, and we begin to understand the passion the Scarecrow feels for life and the art of writing.

We should always be ready to toss the eclectic Scarecrow some new ideas, not that the old ideas have gone stale. In this regard, Grant's article raised important issues. But we should never again speak of the "Clarion Credo" or "Clarion Paradigm" as though they were Dogma. Better yet, let's never use them at all.

Next time you hear someone on the street corner preaching for or against the Word of the Clarion Credo or singing the Psalms of the Clarion Paradigm, run up to them and yell in their face, "Stop it! Just stop it!"

Then go home and write a story.

And Richard—when you, me, and the Scarecrow meet at the publisher's party, I'll take that drink from you (I like Bass Ale or scotch on the rocks), and I'll toast to the demise of the "Clarion Credo." Not the Clarion Par, just the "Credo." 

David E. Meyers attended Clarion West in Seattle. His short stories have appeared in Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine and in The Twilight Zone Magazine.

Greg Cox From the Line-Up

As a graduate of Clarion West (Class of '84), I frequently find myself on panels with titles like "Writing Workshops: Why Bother?" Invariably, at some point in the proceedings, the same accusation is leveled at Clarion and its ilk: Don't such workshops pare away the unique characteristics of young writers and impose instead a harmful and stultifying homogeneity? By indoctrinating an entire generation of aspiring writers with its "Credo," isn't Clarion guaranteeing that future sf will all be written more or less the same?

The charge keeps popping up. Here it is again in Richard Grant's otherwise enthralling and thought-provoking piece in *SF Eye*. The problem is, it's not true.

There are many possible pitfalls in the Clarion experience that might be fruitfully discussed by fair-minded observers—that it belies some students more than others, that it's hard on fragile egos and relationships, that it may well bring on the end of Civilization as We Know It—but does it transform new and idiosyncratic writers into cookie-cutter conformists and money-hungry movie novelists? Not that I've noticed.

Not only is Clarion designed specifically to avoid dogmatism (six different instructors, six different points of view), but, speaking strictly from my own experience and that of my contemporaries, that simply isn't the case. Six years later, Kathryn Cramer does not read like Bruce Fergusson does not read like Carol Severance does not read like Greg Cox. In fact, I suspect I could tell our stories apart with the title pages hidden behind my back. (If it's full of bad jokes, it's probably mine.) Nor, in my opinion, do any of us write particularly like Terry Carr, Suzi McKee Charnas, Arthur Byron Cover, Vonda McIntyre, David Hattwell, or Norman Spinrad (our instructors in '84).

And yet, I imagine a skeptic asking, aren't we discussing, perhaps, the subtle distinctions between, say, strawberry and cinnamon Pop-Tarts? Despite minor variations in style, aren't all Clarion grads still churning out the same competent, complacent, unchallenging, commercial claptrap? That's a deeper, trickier question, but, upon reflection, I don't think so.

Grant makes many good and important points in his article: that merely getting published is not enough; that beauty can be as worthwhile as world-building; that we should read and emulate the classics of literature as well as the successes of our own little genre; that we should, in short, aspire to Art. Funny thing, though. I could've sworn I heard all that at Clarion.

Contrary to Grant's apparent misconceptions, what and why we

write was as much a concern as "clear sentence structure" and landing a juicy book contract. Terry Carr, I recall, often denounced whole subgenres of *sf* and fantasy as being unworthy of our efforts, while Art Cover tried so aggressively to elevate our literary ambitions that he provoked a bit of a backlash ("Fuck Art, I want a Porsche," went the slogan). Ditto for the other instructors. I can personally testify that peer pressure from my fellow Clarionites has kept me from committing, on two different occasions, such artistic misdemeanors as Yet Another Arthurian Saga and One More Gory Horror Potboiler.

It's ironic and a little aggravating. A year ago in Boston, I heard Jack Chalker grumble about what seemed a three-headed beast whose body was called Artsy-Partsy and whose skulls bore the demonic emblems of The New Wave, Cyberpunk, and Clarion. Pretty good company to be in, I thought. Now along comes Richard Grant who lumps together "pro-magazine critic, *Analyst* subscriber, Baen Books author, recent Clarion graduate, or teenage male of normal hormonal balance" to form a collective, philistine threat to experimental and ambitious works of art. Ouch, hit from both sides!

In the end, I feel as though I've been incorrectly fingered in a police line-up. But gee, Officer Grant, it's a case of mistaken identity.

Cross my heart. ▀

John Kessel

A Note on Richard Grant's "The Exile's Paradigm"

Well, if you take "The Exile's Paradigm" as a simple plea for higher ambition from us writers, for wider reading and a greater acquaintance with the classics (whatever they are), what's to argue with? A lot of people going back to Damon Knight and James Blish in the fifties, on through the New Wavers of the sixties, have said this already. Repeatedly. Anyone serious about writing the stuff doesn't have to be convinced, with the possible exception of Orson Scott Card and a few others who have established a position of perpetual resentment against "li-fi."

"If we're going to be writers," says Grant, "let's read the work of good writers, wherever we find them, and let's learn from them what we can." Those who would argue with this are not worth worrying about.

On the other hand, like David Myers, I don't see why Grant has to erect this Clarion straw man and blame it for what's wrong with *sf*. The strictures of commercial genre publishing, the perceived aversion to *sf*, the pulp tradition, and the quality of material identified as *sf* in TV and the movies are much more responsible, in my mind, for the low level of ambition at which most of us write.

The set of rules he calls the Clarion Credo, if you take them as rules of thumb for the beginning writer (and as reminders for the established one), seem to me to make good sense. You'll find essentially the same view of fiction, expounded at greater length, in E. M. Foster's *Aspects of the Novel* (1927). Take "clarity," for instance. Clarity, in my definition, is not the same as simple-mindedness. Clarity of prose does not mean one writes on a third-grade level or slavishly imitates, say, Ernest Hemingway. Writing clearly does not mean abandoning the pursuit of mystery. Clarity means saying, without unintended misdirection, what one means. Nabokov's prose, by my definition, even in its wildest transports, even when reaching after the most abuse of realities, is extremely clear. The ham-handed prose of many subject-verb-object writers, contrarily, can produce descriptions where one is at pains to figure out what is even being described. With this proviso I would recommend clarity to any young writer, and any old writer, too.

Take "conflict," for another example. "Conflict" does not mean only shootings and fistfights. It doesn't only mean the good guys against the bad guys, though this is the level at which much commercial *sf* is written. Conflict arises whenever opposing forces meet in a story; for example, the first half of *Lolita* is driven by the conflict between Humbert Humbert's desire for Lolita and the moral codes of conventional society. This conflict is made more delicious by the fact that Humbert is acutely aware of these codes, so that as he draws closer to Lolita physically by first moving into her house, then marrying her

mother, then, after her mother's fortuitous death, taking Lolita to a motel—the sufferer, internally, the torments of the damned. In the book's second half, he undergoes the devious and prolonged competition with Quilty for the soul (and body) of Lolita. In my 311-page copy of the novel no shot is fired until page 299 (Humbert misses) and no fistfight occurs until page 300 (it is played for comedy). Now I am not saying these conflicts are *all* that occupy us in this wonderful novel. Yet the book's marvelous dissection of the American landscape, its comic contretemps, its marvelous verbal acrobatics, and its love story—probably the most moving love story I have ever read—are all sustained by the continual tension produced by these fundamental conflicts. Without them—and the dreaded "plot" they inspire—Nabokov's novel would lose most of its force. Without some element of conflict, in this broad sense, there is no story. A writer seeking to learn from Nabokov could do worse than to pay some attention to this aspect of the tale. I'll go farther and say that, if he spends all his time studying the prose style, he will never understand an essential source of the story's hold on us.

These observations about stories don't preclude a writer attempting more, or different things. For instance, I find conflict most interesting when the moral issues are not clearcut. I find characters most interesting when they are round—that is, motivated by conflicting desires, capable of irrelevant actions, consistently inconsistent—though there is also a place for the flat character. In defending these rules of thumb I'm not describing a straightjacket, but a playing field, or to use a metaphor I'm sure Nabokov would approve, a game board.

Summing up: if Grant is arguing for high ambition I can't see any sensible person disagreeing with him. But at best his essay puts this simple plea in terms that are more likely, it seems to me, to start an argument than to advance his cause. I am put off by his arch metaphor of "Miss Budrys" and "The Experience of Literature," his repeated put-downs of rational analysis, as if anyone who thinks rationally about art is a reductionist schoolmarm incapable of apprehending mystery. At its worst the essay is full of grandstanding that makes it seem that Richard Grant is god's gift to literary *sf*, one of a small band of clear-sighted and well-read artists (including John Shirley) in a world of commercial hacks. I am perhaps being myself to agree with the substance of this, but I recoil from the attitude.

But since this chip-on-the-shoulder attitude is the consistent tone of much of the material that appears in *SF Eye*, which trumpets itself in an ad in the same issue as the home of "Paranoic (sic) Criticism," I suppose we ought not to be surprised by it. At the level of their rhetoric I think Grant and *SF Eye* would do well to take Grant's own advice: "Let's grow up then. At least let's get out of high school and proceed to college." ▀

John Kessel is the author of *Good News from Outer Space. He lives in Raleigh, North Carolina.*


Gordon Van Gelder Clarion's Razor

The beauty of the Clarion workshops lies in their diversity, and no over-arching generalizations can be applied to the workshops, no more than they can be applied to art itself, or to life. But for many people, the intensity of the workshops shaves off the excesses in their works, leaving them with stories that will not provoke reactions from their peers. I do suggest, however, that Richard Grant would find the majority of works by Clarion attendees to be mediocre regardless of whether these writers attended Clarion or not (Sturgeon's Law).

The Clarion workshops discourage experimentation. This is not to say people don't experiment; however, because of the critiquing structure of the workshop, anybody attempting an experiment will have to be damned ready to defend everything in the test. When style, plot, characterization, etc.—the "Credo"—are taught so fully and so well, stories questioning these principles will meet with much resistance. Does one write to please an audience, or to please oneself? Good storytelling will please the audience—the workshop class—while quirky, individualistic pieces often won't. So workshop attendees, fearing censure, employ the basics of storytelling and produce the good,

well-written stories with fully developed characters and interesting ideas that Grant calls mediocre. Whether they will do more is up to the individual; each now has tools (this is a *workshop*) with which they have grown more proficient through their exercises.

Gabriel García Márquez said "We write so our friends will like us better." Fiction can afford us opportunities to understand ourselves more fully. For writers who principally crave this sort of feedback, or self-insight, the prolonged intensity of the Clarion workshops can be too much of a good thing. Writers emerge with so much close attention paid to their own styles, themes, and thoughts—and often with such strong friendships—that they have achieved the goal Márquez described. (I think also that many people write to say something *different*, a la Bloom's anxiety of influence, and may despair of ever writing a different story again. It is hard enough for artists to stretch their boundaries without having to face the feeling, borne of the close scrutiny writers apply to themselves during Clarion, that their works will never be free of their own bonds. I think this is largely responsible for the writers' blocks so many people encounter during or immediately after the workshops' 42 days.)

The Clarion razor can cut both ways, shedding both detrimental excesses and beneficial ones. Whether this is better for society or for the individual, or both, I do not judge. I feel strongly, however, that anything that encourages writers to express their ideas, emotions, and experiences as skillfully as possible should not be scorned. 

Kathryn Cramer Particle or Wave?

Last December (1989), at the MLA convention in Washington DC, there was a session on "Chaos Theory and Literature" featuring a group of panelists who had all read James Gleick's book. One heard phrases like "chaos theory has overturned Newtonian theory." Never mind that chaos theory is not truly about chaos but a different kind of order; nor is it a theory; rather it is a set of mathematical techniques. The fractal explosion, which takes its origins from the works of Benoit Mandelbrot, embellishes upon Newtonian concepts. It does not replace them. A point was seriously missed.

The feeling I had, standing in the back of that MLA session, scribbling notes, preparing my response, is much the same feeling I had reading David E. Myers' essay, "The Clarion Paradigm," a response to Richard Grant's SF essay, "The Exile's Paradigm." Paradigm shift: Reform or Revolution? Particle or Wave? Both. Neither. The fights are so vicious because the shades of grey are so subtle, the distinctions between charcoal and silvery black so important.

This is the first time I have confessed in print, outside the Clarion West newsletter, to have attended the workshop—'84. Several years ago, I wrote a letter that Steve Bieler, in his role as Clarion West newsletter editor, declined to print "in whole or in part," perhaps because I suggested that certain members of the CW organization be issued BABY ON BOARD t-shirts, and not for reasons of maternity. In my letter, I made the case that post-workshop clubbishness was self-defeating and immature, and that those of us who had passed through the workshop should relinquish attribution of meaning to the Clarion experience to those actually going through it.

The Clarion process bonds the students, by the end of six weeks, into a group. The basis of the group is one part random—who applied that year?—and one part consensus, arising partly from shared experience, partly from peer pressure. Because of the format, the consensus is reached democratically, with particularly charismatic instructors and students playing a 'more equal' role in its formation. This process saturates the collected neophytes with the conventional wisdom of the SF field, thus making the task of becoming a published writer considerably easier. But no matter how accomplished the instructor, the best the instructor can hope to do for the group as a whole is communicate conventional wisdom—for as a group, the students are not primed for more specialized knowledge.

Such conventional wisdom was codified and put into book form by East Lansing Clarion administrator Robin Scott Wilson in his anthology *Three Wise Men*. It's a very useful book, and a particularly good anthology, combining stories by some of the best writers in the field

(such as Joanna Russ, Jack Williamson, Damon Knight, Ursula K. Le Guin) with essays by each of the contributors on how each mastered a particular aspect of the story: plot, theme, setting, etc. In reading Richard Grant's essay, I was struck by how closely his discussion of John Shirley's concept of the Clarion Credo corresponded to the structure of the Wilson anthology. Clarion, Milford, and their latter-day descendants like Syncamore Hill, were formed because their founders were trying to introduce certain minimum literary standards to the field. And to a significant extent, they've succeeded. But as the night follows the day, yesterday's minimum literary standards evolve into today's rules to be broken.

The gap between a minimum literary standard and an aesthetic is, and ought to be, vast. The post-Clarion workshop hangover usually involves fellow workshopers repeating to each other quotable bits from instructor's presentations, raising consensual common sense to an aesthetic. It is a bonding ritual, a transaction reminding both participants of the shared workshop experience.

A few years ago, I was on a Seattle radio show promoting one of my Christmas ghost anthologies. The interviewer made the irritating request that I tell—not read, tell, in my own words—one of the stories from my anthology in three minutes on his show. That evening, at my Christmas party, I recounted the experience to one of my Clarion friends. She remarked that it was fortunate that Vonda McIntyre had told us about storytelling and that her advice must have come in handy. I smiled blankly, nodding. Once she mentioned it, I vaguely remembered Vonda's lecture, and I remembered it being quite good. But in the meantime her lecture had been overlaid by a reading of Samuel R. Delany's essay in response to Vonda's questioning him about pure storytelling when she was his student, and about ten or twenty other conversations with writers on the subject. By the time three years had passed, I had so thoroughly internalized the information that I no longer recalled clearly what Vonda had said. It's not that I didn't value what the instructors told me, rather that I valued it so much that I went out in search of more—lots more—and found it.

So when David Myers began recounting what each instructor in Clarion West had said, I felt that same flush of embarrassment, wincing to think that he valued the context in which these writers spoke over the content of what they had said. And when Richard Grant suggests that writers ought to look elsewhere for models of writing, Myers defends what he already knows in a battle for the honor of the context in which he learned it. This is terribly self-defeating. If one learns most of what one knows about writing at Clarion, one is in very serious trouble.

I would have been much more interested in reading Myers on his own aesthetic, rather than on what other people told him about the subject. He begins a foray into this area with his discussion of Karl Popper. Literary criticism is much more entertaining than doctrinaire rearguarding of isolated fragments of the instructors' lectures. And given that Myers understood such a small percentage of what Richard Grant was getting at, should we trust his rendition of The Sayings of President Bear? Yes, because Myers is being given instruction in common sense by Bear & company, not in high art.

Where Richard Grant is hip and ironic, David Myers is vehement and defensive. These two stances are characteristic of this sort of struggle. In 1984, I did a pleasant several-hour interview with Benoit Mandelbrot, and partly as a result was allowed to come along with a party of physicists taking him to dinner after his colloquium in the physics department. The colloquium had not gone well: in response to criticism (that he used the same examples again and again), rather than using examples accompanied by breathtaking slides, Mandelbrot talked exclusively about applications of fractals he had only begun to explore. The question and answer session was hostile, with members of the physics department posing questions with much the same hostile tone as Myers. Mandelbrot was hip and ironic—arrogant even—in much the same manner of Grant—a man who has raised technique to an art and is accustomed to being misunderstood or disbelieved. As the dinner party arrived at the restaurant and deposited our coats in the coatroom, one of the physicists leaned over to me and asked, regarding Mandelbrot, "Is this guy for real?"

Grant presumes to the aesthetic high ground, an arrogant stance under the best of circumstances, a high ground he seems to enjoy a little too much, resorting to an assertion of hipness, of fashionability, to

consolidate his insecure position. Throughout his essay, right up until the last column, he seems to be arguing for aesthetic divinity. Then he blows it:

Do this: take two drinks, one in each hand, and make your way to the most distant end of the room. There you will find a small group of people who do not seem to fit in with anyone else. For one thing, they are sensibly dressed. These are the Good writers (p. S1).

Sociologically, I understand his point, having spent a fair amount of time at parties in dark corners with the few people to whom I'm interested in talking. But members of the sf literary elite do not necessarily, as a rule, get along, let alone dress well. Sometimes they don't speak. Sometimes they hit each other, sometimes they brandish firearms... And their individual aesthetics may clash as well as their personalities.

Nonetheless, we must give these misunderstood aesthetes credit for having the courage to disagree with what everyone else already knows is true. And a certain arrogance comes with the territory. Mandelbrot, a man reputed to have suggested that his colleagues nominate him for a Nobel Prize, would fit right in in Grant's distant corner.

Grant accurately represents the experience of one reporting from the far side of a paradigm shift. And while the room may have more than one elite corner, we should respect the courage of dissent. Science fiction is not a field in which people have ever agreed just to be friendly. Passionate disagreement and aesthetic conflict have always been the norm. Defenders of the present have always appeared in the weakest position from the vantage point of the world of the future. Myers recalls haunting echoes of the ringing tones of Sam Moskowitz, of John J. Pierce, of science fiction as it was, not as it will be.

While Clarion and workshops like it can be tremendously helpful in the struggle to become a better writer, after "graduating" one must withdraw from the group mind—individuate. One must go out and find what one still lacks as a writer—a heart, a brain, a home, the nerve. ▶

Damon Knight A Reply

There is almost nothing in Richard Grant's admirable essay that I disagree with, except the use of the word "Clanon." (Why are people who have never been to Clarion invariably convinced that they know all about it?)

The John Shirley version of the "Clarion Credo" has three points: well-rounded characterization, clear sentence structure, and ideas supported by strong internal logic. Shirley himself does not claim that any of these are bad; he merely thinks they don't go far enough. (Grant appears to think they are sinister.)

For the record I will stipulate that Clarion has taught all three of these things. It has also taught even more primitive things, like syntax, punctuation, and spelling. It's true that these things don't go far enough. If, as Shirley seems to suggest, Clarion taught nothing more, they would be a prescription for mediocrity.

To these three points Grant adds two more on his own account. One merely defines the work as science fiction and is therefore trivial. (Clarion, by the way, has no such exclusionary rule. We discuss every story simply as fiction, whether it belongs to a genre or not.)

The other is worth quoting in full:

This suggests that the Clarion Credo should be amended so as to specify that at least one of the "well-rounded" characters be a hero, and that it should include a further point:
4. Conflict.

Thus the "Clarion Credo" as defined by Grant is really the Scott Meredith Plot Skeleton: you gotta have a hero, and the hero's gotta win. I have been opposing this weary doctrine for forty years, in the book reviews collected as *In Search of Wonder*, in *Milford and Clarion*, in *Orbis*, and in *Creating Short Fiction*.

Grant probably is not aware that the Milford Conference, out of which Clarion emerged as a spinoff, was organized in opposition to the

Meredith formula of hero, conflict, triumph. It's true that Algis Budrys, who taught at Clarion one week out of the six for about seven years, insisted on a version of the Plot Skeleton which he called the seven-point plot, but it's also true that in every one of those years, I came along after him and said that the seven-point plot was caca. I never thought Budrys did any harm, because he was outnumbered, the students could take their choice, and anyhow I had the last word.

When I said above that Grant's essay is admirable, I meant to be understood literally: I read it with delight bordering on joy. It is powerful, eloquent, provocative, and it is doctrinally sound. Grant reminds us that science fiction should be judged by the same standards we apply to other fiction, and, as it happens, that's what I said on the first page of *In Search of Wonder*, published in 1956.

If Grant's argument has a logical weakness, it is that he muddles together reductionism in teaching writers (a useful pedagogical device) with reductionism in teaching readers (a pedantic horror). At Clarion we do analyze stories into "elements," including some Grant mentions and some he doesn't, but we always make it clear that they are only categories of convenience.

Clarion students come to us hoping to learn how to write better. Some of them want to find out how to be successful crafters of trade goods, but we don't know how to teach that, and wouldn't bother if we did. We encourage the students to write better than they think they can; we give them technical advice, and they use it as they are able. Some have been brilliant successes, some mediocrities, some failures.

It is true that we don't teach students how to be great writers. I myself don't teach them how to write at all; I teach them how not to write. (Don't write a first page that gives the reader zero information; don't reveal the sex of your narrator for the first time on page six.) I also tell them they can break any rule, even those two, if they're good enough and know what they're doing.

As for high-school literature classes, I think they are criminal. Mine turned me off Shakespeare permanently, and made me incapable of keeping my eyes focused on any poem longer than a sonnet. My English teachers were kinder than any others, and yet when one of them told me I might like *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* by Thornton Wilder, I marked it down for avoidance, and never read it until years later after I had found and loved *Heaven's My Destination* and *The Idea of March*.

Here Grant's argument raises questions that are not as simple as they look. When he tells us, very persuasively, that we overvalue works in our genre because we have not taken the trouble to compare them with other works in literature, it seems to me that we are confronting a paradox with a dilemma behind it. Grant asks us to admire, or at least take the risk of being exposed to, fiction of a higher order: but isn't that exactly what Miss Budrys [Mr. Grant pretends to believe that his ninth-grade English teacher was named Miss Budrys] was trying to make Richard do?

When we fled from literature into junk fiction, we were demonstrating to the world and Miss Budrys that nobody was going to tell us what to like. We were right and Miss Budrys was wrong; but did she know something we still don't know? When we feel a reluctant dissatisfaction with the junk we read, what are we saying to Richard, that he should have liked Steinbeck's "The Chrysanthemums" after all?

Is this, in fact, nothing but a question of taste? If so, we can stop talking, because it is absurd to tell somebody who likes hot dogs that he ought to like *cog au vin*.

But, you say, there are keener and more subtle pleasures in *cog au vin*. And if I reply that hot dogs with mustard and relish seem to me rich and satisfying, whereas *cog au vin* to me is muddy and bitter, then what? If there is a hierarchy of taste, and no doubt there is, does it serve any purpose except to let some people look down on others? If Miss Budrys was wrong, can Grant be right?

I read "The Chrysanthemums" in adulthood, and it blew me away. (Nobody made me read it in school.) I have never yet been able to penetrate more than two chapters into *Tristram Shandy*. (Nobody made me read that either.) I read *Ada* and found it both thin and dull, although I have read other Nabokov novels with pleasure. Is this somebody's fault? Should I feel guilty about it and resolve to do better? These are among the questions Grant raises; they are grand and important questions, which I hope we will explore at our leisure. ▶

The Hemingway Hoax by Joe Haldeman

New York: William Morrow & Co., 1990; \$16.95 hc; 155 pages
reviewed by Charles Platt

The best way to convey the oddness of *The Hemingway Hoax* by Joe Haldeman is by summarizing its plot.

John Baird, a middle-aged college professor, is a leading authority on the works of Ernest Hemingway. Baird identifies with Hemingway; he even shares a similar war wound, which he acquired in Vietnam.

While visiting a Florida bar where Hemingway once hung out, Baird runs into Castle, a con-man with a criminal record. Castle suggests that Baird could get rich by writing a Hemingway pastiche and passing it off as one of the master's legendary missing manuscripts (lost on a train in France in 1922). Baird is reluctant to break the law but arrives at an implausible compromise: he'll do the forgery mainly as an exercise in fooling his academic colleagues, then reveal that it's a fake slightly before publication.

When he goes searching for a vintage typewriter to do the job, Baird is contacted by a spirit entity that warns him he will create a temporal dislocation if he persists in his plan. Meanwhile, his young wife, Lena, starts having an affair with Castle, who convinces her that they have to persuade Baird to go all the way with his forgery. To this end, Castle commissions a hooker to seduce Baird, so that Castle can take photographs for use as blackmail.

But the hooker turns out to have a heart of gold and becomes sentimentally attached to Baird. He starts writing a Hemingway pastiche (Haldeman includes some facsimile manuscript pages), ignores further "spirit warnings," and is killed as a consequence. He reincarnates—repeatedly—in parallel universes, all of which are supposedly heading toward nuclear war in the twenty-first century as the indirect result of public interest in macho American writers such as Hemingway. Ultimately, in a sense that is never spelled out clearly, Baird becomes Hemingway, and also his own nemesis, journeying freely up and down the timeline, looking forward to the armageddon that is inevitable now that his forgery attempt has been aborted.

What is one to make of all this? Even the book's publishers seem unsure. In their flap copy they credit it with "the fast-paced magic of science fiction," but the words "science fiction" appear nowhere on the front cover. The publicity release calls it "a literary mystery." The reviewer's slip gives it a subtitle—"A Short Comic Novel of Existential Terror"—which has been omitted from the book itself. In back-cover endorsements, Peter Straub evasively describes it as "a short and dazzling entertainment," while Stephen King merely heaps praise upon Haldeman and says nothing about the actual book at all.

There are, in fact, no orthodox terms in which to describe this novel. It not only violates conventional wisdom about fictional categories, it breaks fundamental rules of storytelling even while it rests its plot upon them. The action is entirely built on coincidence, beginning with that most ancient literary device, a chance meeting in a bar. The characters are whimsically bent to conform to the writer's needs. Baird has to have an encyclopedic knowledge of Hemingway's works—so Haldeman fits him out with an eidetic memory so formidable he can recall every word he ever read. A hooker needs to seduce this middle-aged professor—so Haldeman repairs Baird's genital war wound for the occasion and arranges for the hooker to be a Hemingway fan. Indeed, to make the plot work, Haldeman makes *everyone* familiar with Hemingway's fiction: the hooker, the professor's wife, the jailbird con artist, a typewriter salesman, and the spirit entities who live outside our space-time continuum.

The most extreme piece of expediency is saved till last. When Haldeman decides it's time to end the novel, somewhere around page 150, he simply kills off most of the characters.

Read This

Recently read and recommended by Joe R. Lansdale:

Kick the Can—Jim Lehrer (Ballantine). Funny stuff. Novel about a bunch of innocents and near-innocents as told by The One-Eyed Mac, a notorious bus pirate. Kind of humor I like best. Where the characters don't know what they're doing is funny, but the reader does. Good stuff.

Mark Twain at His Best—Mark Twain, of course, edited by Charles Neider (Doubleday). Stories, excerpts from books, essays, letters. You can't beat Twain, who is the guy who wrote the Great American Novel, *Huckleberry Finn*, and is one of my favorite writers of all time.

Panetti's Extraordinary Endings of Practically Everything and Everybody—Charles Panetti (Harper & Row). Non-fiction book on check-out-times for the human species as well as how we get checked-out. From old age to weird executions to last words to last stands and suicides, to nifty information about how to become a eunuch and why becoming one was once popular and profitable. Wonderful bathroom book. Maybe they could put books like this on toilet rollers. You know, read a few squares while you do your business, then use what you read to wipe up your business. Nah! You might want to read something over, and look where you'd be.

The Complete Stories of Flannery O'Connor—Flannery O'Connor (Scribner Books). Probably my favorite writer. I dip into her work from time to time. Recently has been one of these times. "A Good Man Is Hard To Find" is one of the best stories ever written. For me, O'Connor outshines Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Faulkner, all that bunch. Not only the

greatest Southern writer, but one of the greatest writers period. Died in her late thirties. Seeing what she accomplished in that time is depressing. Way it is when you think Stephen Crane took the big, dark step at age 29.

Little Boxes of Bewilderment, Suspense Comedies by Jack Ritchie, edited by Francis M. Nevins, Jr. (St. Martin's). One of the finest short story writers in the mystery/suspense field. Wrote twist ending stuff, but like Fred Brown, he had class and style and originality. Lean and mean and comic; a stylist to envy. Even when you see what Ritchie is leading up to, he's still fun, and he's one of those that can make even the most jaded and well-read reader of the twist-ending story chuckle out loud. Kind of writer that can hook the kind of reader who wouldn't normally be caught dead reading this kind of stuff. Very little of the highly prolific Ritchie has been collected, and he wrote short stories only, so he's not as well known as he should be. This book should help to correct that.

Rounders 3—Max Evans (Doubleday). A great and sadly neglected writer. *The Rounders* was filmed as an okay movie some years back, but the book, that's the gem. And so are the other two short books about Dusty Jones and Wrangler Lewis. This guy is wonderful. Writes about the modern West. Not a shoot-em-up or fist-fight writer. The three stories contained in the book are funny and tragic at the same time, written with an authenticity and a poetic eye. Max Evans' introduction on becoming a cowboy and a writer is worth the price of the book alone. Don't miss this one.

I have revealed more of this book than is customary in a review, partly, as I say, to convey its oddness, but also because the plot isn't the most salient element. The style is enviably fluent. The characters are portrayed with simple, eloquent conviction, even while they are being shamelessly manipulated. Haldeman has so much talent that he makes his work compulsively readable even while one looks askance at its bizarre conception and implausible developments. This is, I think, a remarkable achievement: a seemingly conventional narrative that nips up its own rules, mocks our credulity, yet seduces us into a state of acquiescence.

One reason it works is because it seems such a heartfelt piece of writing. Haldeman's identification with his protagonist seems just as deep as his protagonist's identification with Hemingway. And yet, even while the author seems to be baring his soul, he's doing a fan-dance. The protagonist's profession and persona change subtly from one universe to the next, and so does his Vietnam war wound, sometimes rendering him sexually dysfunctional (to an extent never made precisely clear), sometimes not. Haldeman's own obvious admiration for Hemingway is counterbalanced by his suggestion that macho American writers are socially subversive. (He lists several culprits, including Heinlein). In

fact, we never know exactly where the writer stands behind the novel, and its ending is just as abrupt, just as enigmatic as the ending of the movie version of 2001.

This is an apt comparison in that *The Hemingway Hoax* reads like an artifact from the 1960s. The protagonist is rooted in that era, still grappling with its legacy, and Haldeman himself is still very much a 1960s writer. Only an unreformed radical from those days of open-ended, fuzzy-headed idealism could maintain such an air of naive innocence while indulging himself in such presumptuous nonconformity.

Most of his contemporaries have long since retreated from literary experimentation (names such as Silverberg, Moorcock, Ellison, Malzberg, Zelazny, Aldiss, and Delany come to mind). Haldeman, however, seems oblivious to the conservatism and constraints in category fiction of the 1990s, and I hope he stays that way. *The Hemingway Hoax* is his most exotic, disconcerting, revelatory novel. By conventional standards it's a fine mess, but if one takes it on its own strange terms it works, and works well. ▶

Charles Platt lives in New York City

Alexei Panshin Short Stories

A very long while ago, or so it seems, I was asked to write an sf story of fifty words or less for a collection of such stories. I did it—but it was tough to do. I had to sweat and sweat to get the wordage down. And finally (I admit it) I had to resort to just a tad of cheating. I managed to get the body of the story to the right length, maybe even a word or two less, but to make proper sense of the story, you had to take account of the title, which I didn't count in the fifty words.

Recently, I was told that all these years later the anthology for which the story would be written would finally be seeing publication this fall. Visions of being in competition for the Hypothetical and Nebulous Awards in the Fifty-Words-and-Under category (it's a *real* good story and deserves to win both) has set me to thinking about short stories, and how short it is possible for a story to be and still be a story.

What are the necessary constituents of a story? This is an extension, or a corollary, of the old philosophical dialog I used to hold with myself back in the days when I watched the original *Gong Show* with the greatest fascination, wondering what kinds of moves and changes were necessary to constitute "an act," and what was the minimum that was necessary for a performer to hold the stage and not be gonged. How good could an almost-good-enough performer be, and still get gonged? How bad could a wretched performer be, yet still manage to hold the stage?

Thirty years and more ago, there were some people who played with the shortness of the short story. The best of them, of course, was Fredric Brown. And one of his short-shorts has even passed into oral culture—the one about the super-computer which is asked if there is a God, and replies, "There is now."

I remember a pair of super-shorts, I don't recall by whom, which even presented themselves in their titles as respectively the shortest, and even-shorter-by-one-letter-than-the-shortest. These were about the last man on earth, sitting in a room. And either there is a knock on the door, or a lock on the door.

But how much shorter yet is it possible to get?

I can't say that I've resolved my questions firmly and finally. But I did gain a certain measure of insight yesterday when I suddenly realized in the midst of writing a book proposal that a highly familiar five-word phrase—indeed, the basis on which modern Western civilization has been erected—was in fact not a scientific statement in any sense, but in fact a mythic story.

Inspired by that, I went into a state of creative gonzo and come up with a number of even shorter candidates. I'd like to share my favorites with you—my personal nominations for stories of five words, four, three, two and one.

I'd dearly love to see comparable sets of *short* stories offered by anyone else who cares to play the game. I know why I think my choices can be read as stories—or, at least, I think that I think that I know—but I'm by no means positive. Seeing other people's candidates for *short*

storyhood might help to make the matter clearer not just for me but for all of us.

So put on your story caps, boys and girls, and off we go.

Five words:

I think, therefore I am.

Four words:

"Be," and it was.

Three words (I considered "In and out," but this is a family magazine and the story lacks a climax, so I finally voted with H.G. Wells and Henry Kuttner):

The sleeper woke.

Two words:

The end.

One word (thank God for compounds):

Oneness. ▶

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Greg Cox
Excerpts from *The Transylvanian Library:*
A Consumer's Guide to Vampire Fiction

GILBERT, WILLIAM

"The Last Lords of Gardonal" (*Argo*, July to September, 1867: 32 pp.)

An unusual story in that the vampire appears not as a Creature of Hell, but rather as an instrument of Divine Retribution. A despot, Baron Conrad of Gardonal, marries a reluctant peasant girl whom he has long pursued, not knowing that the girl actually died several weeks earlier during his first attempted abduction. Her resurrection as a bloodthirsty Undead is the work of Innominato, a mysterious wizard who is, regardless of his occult gifts, definitely on the side of the angels.

(Still, one can't help wondering what happened to the vampires afterwards, and who she fed on next.)

Despite, or perhaps because of, the impeccable justice involved, this is not as creepy as "Wake Not the Dead," which is otherwise resembles. See also: CRAWFORD, F. MARION.

"The Last Lords" first perished in a serial published in *Argo*. Nowadays, the story can be found in the anthology, *Dracula's Breed*.

BURTON, SIR RICHARD F.

Vikram and the Vampires (1870: 243 pp.)

The "Vampire" here is actually a form of Hindu demon called a *Bairai*, who spends most of the book entangling the great Raja Vikram with fantastic tales of Ancient India. A sort of ghoulish Scheherazade.

Physically, the *Bairai* is a small bat-like creature who can also possess the bodies of the dead. Although cold and clammy, he does not display any notable appetite for blood. One suspects that this demon got labeled a vampire simply for lack of any more appropriate English noun—and that this *Library*, alas, has been infiltrated by an accident of translation.

Sir Francis was, though, an occasional associate of Bram Stoker, so we are free to speculate on Vikram's contribution to Count Dracula.

LE FANU, JOSEPH SHERIDAN.

"Carmilla" (*The Dark Blue*, 1871: 70 pp.)

Before *Dracula*, there was *Carmilla*. This long story, first published in an extinct English magazine, is the most celebrated precursor of Bram Stoker's upcoming work (poor Azzo von Klabar being sadly ignored). Certain similarities are easily spotted: the lonely castle on the outskirts of civilization (Styria, not Transylvania), the fortuitous arrival of a scholarly expert on occult matters (Vordenburg, rather than Van Helsing), and an Undead menace springing from the ruins of a once-regal household. Thus, paving the way for the infamous Count, we have the Countess Miracula Karnstein. Alias "Carmilla."

The story is narrated by Laura, a self-assured young woman of nineteen living alone with her father in an obscure province of old Austria. Lonely because of her isolated existence, Laura is naturally delighted when circumstances bring the family an unexpected houseguest, a languid maiden named Carmilla—who refuses on any account to discuss her past. Despite Carmilla's eccentric ways (she sleeps late, for one thing, and cannot abide the sound of hymns), Laura grows very close to her new-found companion. And Carmilla in turn lavishes affection upon her hostess, to a degree that disturbs and embarrasses poor Laura—who briefly toys with the fancy that Carmilla is actually a fairy-tale prince in disguise.

As weeks go by, neighboring peasant villages are rapidly depopulated by an unusual, sudden plague. Laura is fading too, but slowly, as if "the plague" meant to take its own sweet time with her. . . .

Carmilla may not have been the first vampiress in fiction, but *Le Fanu* popularized and defined forever the archetypal female vampire: Graceful. Dark-haired. Sexually ambiguous.



About the latter, now is as good a time as any to discuss one of the more striking discoveries to be made exploring this *Library*. Popular fiction, it seems, has consistently linked vampires with lesbianism. It appears almost obligatory, in fact, for female Undead to seek out mortal women. See, for example: CHETWYND-HAYES, DREADSTONE, ENGSTROM, GARTON, HORLER, HUGHES, JENNINGS, LINSSEN, MYERS, RANDOLPHE, RICE (ANNE), SARALEGUT, SCOTT (JODY), STRIEBER, TURNER, WILLIAMSON (J.N.), and YARBRO. Male gay vampires, however, are harder to find, and rarely obvious. RICE maybe, or HOWARD (RICHARD), BIXBY, CHETWYND-HAYES, DEAR, JOHNSTONE, STENBOCK, TALBOT, or VIERECK.

Even in *Dracula*, the model for most modern vampire stories, the Count himself confines himself to victims of the opposite sex, while his Undead brides are not so picky. "Come, sister," they coo to heroine Mira. "Come to us. Come! Come!"

And so on down the decades, starting with *Carmilla*. My own pet theory is that it is actually the gender of the victim that is persistent here. Chauvinist tradition dictates that the Monster must endanger the Helpless Female, and if the Monster also happens to be a woman, so be it. And given the inherently erotic atmosphere of the vampire's kiss, well . . . what's a little kindness between friends? Especially after such distinguished precedents.

On its own terms, the story of *Carmilla*/Miracula has held up better than even her most successful predecessors. Lord Ruthven and Sir Francis Varney, and is still reprinted continually. *Le Fanu*'s antiquated style gets in the way at times, being both vague and verbose, but he comes through with some vivid thrills, and *Carmilla* herself is a disturbingly sympathetic character. (Can anyone doubt, after reading this story, that she truly loves Laura, in her own far way?) One only wishes he had spent a little more time fleshing out the story; Laura's narration, skipping as it does over lengthy intervals in a paragraph or two, sometimes frustrates the modern reader, who would prefer a closer, longer look at this oh-so-subtle seduction. Then again, I suppose that's what the movies are for. . . .

The films below are all very loose adaptations of the original story. Curiously, there are no American productions:

Vampyr (French, 1932)

Et Mourir De Plaisir (French-Italian, 1960), also known as *Blood and Roses*

La Malédiction de Les Karnsteins (Spanish, 1962), aka *Terror in the Crypt*

La Novia Enamantada (Spanish, 1972) aka *Bloody Fiancee*
The Vampire Lovers (English, 1970)

The latter film inspired two sequels, both featuring the character of Countess Karnstein: *Last for a Vampire* (1970) and *Twins of Evil* (1971). *Carmilla* has also occasionally appeared on the stage, although no single adaptation has yet achieved the stature of, say, the Deane-Balderston *Dracula* play. David Compton's *Carmilla: A Gothic Thriller in Two Acts* is probably the most readily available version.

See also HUGHES and GARDEN.

LINTON, ELIZA LYNN

"The Fate of Madame Cabanel" (*Within a Silken Thread*, 1880: 12 pp.)

Superstition is the real monster in this story of an innocent woman who is falsely accused of vampirism.

In a rural hamlet in Brittany, Monsieur Babanel's fair-skinned English bride is greeted with suspicion by the xenophobic villagers—and with jealousy by Monsieur's former mistress. An ill-timed epidemic provides the excuse for willful misunderstanding and an impromptu execution.

A rebuttal to the entire genre? Perhaps, though in its own way "The Fate of Madame Cabanel" is as horrific as "Carmilla." There have

only been a handful of stories like it (see DOYLE, GARDNER, MATHESON [RICHARD] and LEE), but all leave us with the same sobering reminder: don't go stalking someone unless you're really sure.

This story first appeared in a 19th century collection by Lynn. It was recently reprinted in *Dracula's Breed*.



ROBINSON, PHIL

"The Man-Eating Tree" (*Under the Pankab*, 1881: 7 pp.)

"The Last of the Vampires" (UK: *Contemporary Review*, 1892: 8 pp.)

We may have to define two new categories here: the Botanical Vampire and the Zoological Vampire. Marginal cases, perhaps, but too recurring to ignore... and both to be found in these rather creaky jungle adventures.

"The Man-Eating Tree" is just that: an oversized, and very animated, carnivorous plant with "vampire leaves" that will even suck the juices out of their brother leaves if they get the chance. It is found in darkest Africa, where it subsists on the flesh and blood of planes, animals, and unfortunate natives. The story has not aged well, and is interesting only in that it anticipates the vampire vegetables of "The Flowering of the Strange Orchid," "The Sumach," "The Garden of Fear," and, of course, *Little Shop of Horrors* in its various stage and screen incarnations.

"The Last of the Vampires" is found not in Africa, but in Peru, where an unlucky explorer of the Amazon discovers the *Arincha*, a blood-drinking, pterodactyl-like creature with a canine head, barbed wings, and an aversion to light. It is, we are told, one of the "extinct flying lizards of the Flood." No relation, apparently, to the Karnsteins or *Dracula*, although they'd probably make wonderful pets.

Another historical curiosity, mostly, but more readable today than "The Man-Eating Tree." For Zoological Vampires, see FERGUSSON, HYDER and QUIROGA.

Robinson wrote at least one more story with vampiric themes, called "Medusa."



TOLSTOY, ALEXIS

"The Family of the Vourdalak" (1884: 21 pp.)

A *vourdalak* is a Slavic vampire that, like the vamps of folklore, prefers the blood of its family and loved ones. In this Russian horror story, a fickle youth woos a *vourdalak's* grand-daughter, only to learn a terrifying lesson about the dangers of "undying love," not to mention the fury of a vampiric scorned.

Beyond the familiar demon lover, though, Tolstoy presents a creepy, claustrophobic portrait of an isolated household under siege by Creatures of Hell. (See also: "The Drifting Snow" by DERLETH.) Here is a rare glimpse back at the vampire's primal roots. No Gothic castles, no Byronic noblemen; just frightened peasants trembling indoors during the long winter's nights.

A movie version, starring Boris Karloff as the senior *vourdalak*, appeared in 1963 as part of an Italian horror anthology entitled *Black Sabbath*.



ANNE CRAWFORD

"A Mystery of the Campagna" (*Unwin's Annual*, 1887: 28 pp.)

Despite the forebodings of his friends, a brash young composer named Marcello secludes himself in an old country estate to finish his masterpiece. Later, after an ominous silence, those same friends are relieved to hear that Marcello has been glimpsed in the company of a beautiful woman. Ah, they think, nothing to worry about, merely a frivolous dalliance of some sort. Then Marcello's *ghost* shows up...

Oops.

It's too late to save Marcello, obviously, but the fatal beauty, Vespertilio, ends up getting staked in a scene that anticipates, to a remarkable degree, the execution of Lucy in *Dracula*. And so ends yet another seductive Victorian vampiress, of a kind already becoming cliché.

Arthur C. Clarke My Favorite (?) Story



Do I have a favorite story? I'm not sure; if I do, it probably depends on my mood.

Also, my favorite story (if it exists) would not necessarily be my *best* story. If I was asked about what that was, I'd probably reply "Transit of Earth"—but I wouldn't argue very vehemently with anyone who selected the two better-known stories, "The Star" and "The Nine Billion Names of God."

My favorite book? Well, as they say, it's always the next one: my predilection for "last" novels has been much exaggerated. I suspect that as "Galileo" closes in on Jupiter in December 1995, "The Final Odyssey" will be perking a way in my subconscious...

As for the existing novels, I think my favorite, and probably my best, is *The Song of Distant Earth*. However, everyone who's read it seems to think that *The Ghost from the Grand Banks* is my *chef d'oeuvre*, though I don't think comparisons are possible, because it's totally unlike anything I've ever written before—being the first novel I've done (except the war-time memoir *Glide Path*) which has no science fiction content.

Well, almost none. The last chapter is a couple of hundred million years in the future....

(Ann Crawford, who wrote under the name "Von Degen," was the elder sister of F. Marion Crawford, author of "For the Blood is the Life." Ann's story can be found, under her own name, in *Dracula's Breed*.)



HAWTHORNE, JULIAN

"Ken's Mystery" (1888: 26 pp.)

Another boy-meets-vampiress story, distinguished only by being set in Ireland, a country seldom associated with the Undead. (And why is that? Did Saint Paddy drive out the bloodsuckers with the snakes?)

Ken, an American tourist, spends the night with the ravishing Ethelind Fiongalua, whom he meets while walking through an old graveyard. He accompanies her back to her lavish, richly-appointed home—only to wake up the next morning amidst ruins. Chilled to the bone, he is never the same man again.

The dream-like quality of Ken's experience is reminiscent of both "Le Morte Amoureuse" and the later work of Clark Ashton Smith. Unfortunately, Hawthorne's prose is as prosaic as the story's title, and does not survive such companions well.

"Ken's Mystery" first appeared in Hawthorne's collection, *David Peindexter's Disappearance*, and was last reprinted in *Vamps: For an Irish vampire of an entirely different sort*, see FRITCH.



BIERCE, AMBROSE

"The Death of Halpin Frayser" (1893: 15 pp.)

"Bitter" Bierce, as the author of *The Devil's Dictionary* was known, both before and after his mysterious disappearance, gives an old myth a nasty Oedipal twist in this story of a man who, quite inadvertently, sleeps near the grave of his long-lost, much-loved mother. During a lengthy dream sequence, Mom returns, now transformed into a ghostly, bloodthirsty revenant....

This vampiress at least is more frightening than erotic. The story itself, alas, is awkwardly constructed, and concerned more with the elaborate chain of coincidences that lead Halpin Frayser to his doom than with his unnatural mother (whatever she may be). Still, this is the closest Bierce ever came to writing a vampire story.

Unless, of course, he's out there now.



X.L. (real name: Julian Osgood Field)
"A Kiss of Judas" (UK: *The Pall Mall Magazine*, 1894: 36 pp.)

Nowhere's an odd weirdie: the Children of Judas are inherently evil people who must *kill themselves* in order to return to earth as semi-vampires and give their enemies the kiss of death. (Talking about holding a grudge!) The mark they leave upon their victims is "XXX," symbolic of the thirty pieces of silver paid to Christ's betrayer.

That's the theory. In practice, Isaac Lebedenko, a rat-faced nobleman from the "Kaspak Mountains," is reincarnated as a deadly and seductive woman, thereby becoming the first transsexual Undead in the history of the genre. An interesting idea, sadly wasted in a mucky plot about a heavy English colonel who bets two hundred francs that he cannot be truly frightened. Guess what? He loses the bet.

Still, this "Kiss" gets points for originality.

STENBOCK, COUNT STANISLAUS ERIC
"The Sad Story of a Vampire" (1894: 12 pp.)

"Vampire stories are generally located in Styria," we are told at the very beginning of this tale, and a few sentences later, "Vampires are generally described as dark, sinister-looking, and singularly handsome."

Hard to believe, isn't it? "The Vampire" is only seventy-five years old, *Dracula* is not even written yet, but Stenbock already has the clichés down.

There is an estate in Styria, alright, and a handsome stranger named Count Vardack, who turns out to be a genuine Reluctant Vampire. The narrator is even named Carmela, though it is the heroine's brother who is eventually destroyed by the loving attentions of the Count.

Not a very exciting story really, but we might note the continued association of evil with aristocracy.

WELLS, H.G.
"The Flowering of the Strange Orchid" (UK: *Pall Mall Magazine*, August, 1894: 14 pp.)

The Botanical Vampire returns in this story of a mild British horticulturalist who inherits a orchid bulb of unknown *genus* after the untimely death of the bulb's discoverer, an explorer slain by (or so it is assumed) "jungle leeches." As in "The Man-Eating Tree," however, it is the plant itself that turns out to be the leech, attacking its prey with blood-sucking, tentacle-like "rootlets."

As in the story by ROBINSON, there's nothing supernatural here, nor any direct connection to vampire mythology, but we might note that Wells's classic novel of alien invasion, *The War of the Worlds*, also featured malevolent, tentacled, not-quite-vampires who live on human blood, which only proves that the boundary between science fiction and horror has *never* been clearly defined—and that vampires have had a foot in both camps from the beginning.

Paul Williams
from *Rock and Roll: The 100 Best Singles*

Chuck Berry
"Memphis, Tennessee"

In June 1959 Chuck Berry released a single called "Back in the U.S.A.," with the tag line "I'm so glad I'm living in the U.S.A." Six months later the U.S.A. returned the favor by arresting and convicting him on trumped-up charges—his real crime was being black and successful (and insufficiently cautious) in a white society, so (poetic injustice) he was railroaded on a slavery statute, charged with involuntary servitude for providing transportation and a job at his night-club to a young woman he met while performing. No coercion was involved, and I've never heard of a white musician being convicted of any similar charge. He served twenty months in federal prison—you can read the full story in his excellent autobiography.

The flip side of "Back in the U.S.A." was a song called "Memphis, Tennessee." According to Berry, this was recorded at his office in St. Louis "in the heat of a muggy July afternoon with a \$79.00 reel-to-reel Sears Roebuck recorder . . . I played the guitar and the bass track, and I added the tick-tock drums that trot along in the background which sound so good to me." The song was not a hit in its original form, but in 1963 Lonnie Mack put out an instrumental version (just called "Memphis") that got to #5, and a year later Johnny Rivers hit #2 with a live, vocal version of the song. The rhythmic figure supporting Chuck's sweet vocals and sweeter slide guitar on the homemade original (two beats repeated four times, rising twice and then descending) was picked up by hundreds of other musicians; I don't know if Berry originated it but it is still known to music makers as the "Memphis" beat—you can hear it for example on Marvin Gaye's "Can I Get A Witness" (released five months after Lonnie Mack's hit) and on the Everly Brothers' delightful "Gone Gone Gone." The great-great-grandchildren of this rhythmic figure will still be shuffling their way through the folk and popular musics of a thousand nations long after you and I are no longer around to listen.

A good poet almost unthinkingly gives voice to the

primary concerns of his or her era (long before they're identified by anyone else) so it is not surprising that Chuck Berry in 1958 penned this poignant story of father/daughter separation, though he himself was not divorced (and had never lived in Memphis). Once again he has crafted a brilliant fiction, stunning in its soft-spoken simplicity, its mythic power, and the oh-so-satisfying deadpan shocker in its next to last line. Not many rock and roll artists can raise goosebumps with their narrative skills. Berry also has the novelist's or poet's gift for language ("Last time I saw Marie she's wavin' me goodbye/With hurry-home drops on her cheek that trickle from her eye") and structure (notice how often the words "help me" occur in each of the first three verses; the fourth marks the only appearance—at precisely the climactic moment—of "please") and most of all meter. He is American poet laureate due particularly to his ability to uncover and articulate (the latter a performer's art; definitely a large part of good poetry) the hidden rhythms of the American vocabulary: "long distance information" and "Memphis, Tennessee." Then there's the imagery and economy of storytelling ("my uncle took the message and he wrote it on the wall").

So he has the words, the rhythm, the story and the music. He also has the voice, and the guitar. Small wonder we so revere our Uncle Chuck. A good looker, too—small wonder the feds were jealous. But a record like "Memphis, Tennessee" (and mark you well, there is no other record like "Memphis, Tennessee") transcends its component parts, even its creator's talents. Its triumph is its smallness, its humanness. The quiet yelping of the guitar during the instrumental break, the magical sound made by bass and drums as they transition back to the verse, are as exciting in their own way as the orgasmic guitar solos of "Johnny B. Goode." Here is the human heart uncovering itself, sharing itself, writing its yearning message on the wall. "Call Marie." Okay, uncle, we will.

First release: Chess 1729, June 1959

Screed

(letters of comment)

Glenn Grant, Montreal, Québec, Canada

Jessica Amanda Salmonson's overview of Amazon lit was fascinating, particularly the tantalizing historical data, but she threatens to undermine her own authority with her bizarre characterization of the cyberpunks.

As for her claim that "women are notable only by their lack of presence among the *Sci Fi Eye* fraternity," I don't think Elizabeth Hand, Misha, Nancy Collins, Mari Kotani, Joan Gordon, Lynn Stef-fan, Kathe Kolja, Constance Ash, Martha Grenon, and Zena Kruzick are going to like being so off-handedly dismissed. True, they are outnumbered by the men, which is unfortunately the case in the entire sf field. If not enough women are contributing to *SF Eye*, whose fault is that? Has Ms. Salmonson sent them anything?

So, *NYRSF* #20 was a thought-provoking issue. In particular, it made me wonder: What're these rock'n'roll singles reviews doing here, anyway?

Douglas Barbour, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

I hesitate to write & ask, because you might just take it as an excuse to continue, but I will express my hope that the next year will not see a repeat of the utterly juvenile & uselessly redundant "humour" of Adrian Cole's "The Vulgarard," which tried something much better done years ago by the Harvard Lampoon.

On the other hand, I can offer nothing but praise for Patrick D. Murphy's "The Left Hand of the Pilgrim," which reminded me that I simply don't pay all that much attention to the *SFRA Newsletter*. Of course, it never occurred to me that anyone could find fault with Joanna Russ as a major critic of sf (she probably deserves a few more Nebulas, etc., than she's been given, too). Since I've been watching a similar rearguard action in our university against the hiring of female staff last year, I shouldn't have been surprised; but it is sad that otherwise intelligent men can make such fools of themselves. I am very happy that Murphy took them on, if only because he does such a fine job of illustrating Russ's massive contribution to sf criticism ("massive" here does not refer to number of pages but rather to number of insights, weight of intelligence applied). I thank him, & you, for offering his essay to a wider audience.

I would like more reviews, *per se*, but I am enjoying most of the essays, & many of the recommended reading lists.

Robert A. Collins, Boca Raton, Florida

Despite a display of erudition in his review, Robert Kilheffer's statement that he was "frankly horrified" by the "feel-good mysticism" at the conclusion of Dan Simmons' *Fall of Hyperion* is perhaps unintentionally revealing. His reflex pejorative attitude toward "mysticism" identifies him with the prevalent Marxist-realist school of "serious" criticism, which regards the function of high art as something analogous to puppy training: "Rub their noses in it!" *Sf* is the stuff of truth; transcendence is a fuzzy, escapist concept.

Thus, though Kilheffer professes to recognize (and admire) the Romantic literary allusions essential to the work, he appears to suffer yet from a schoolboy aversion to the Romantic poets and their world view. The passage he cites as the basis for his judgment is in fact the most encyclopedic allusion of them all.

"Love was these . . . forces," Simmons' character muses; "the subquantum impossibility that carried information . . . was nothing more or less than love." Kilheffer, morally certain that love is nothing but cheap sentimental hogwash, cries foul. But love as a cosmological principle has a long and honorable history in philosophy. For classical/medieval cosmologists from Aristotle through Plotinus, it was the essential glue of the cosmos, the force that binds the elements into relatively stable materials. The rise of scientific materialism never really eclipsed this concept—it was, after all, a basic focus of the mystical experience, reported by hundreds of culturally

diverse persons, including the German Romantic philosophers and those English Romantics who were directly influenced by them, notably Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats (not to mention diverse contemporary figures such as T. S. Eliot, Aldous Huxley, Timothy Laary, Theodore Sturgeon, Gary Zukav, etc.). Sol's experience is thus central to a venerable and still vital tradition, and one especially relevant for the great Romantics.

Of course, like all the "universals" of human experience, love is, as Simmons says, "that most banal of things" when talked about, yet for those who experience its "power," undeniably transcendent.

Simmons' conclusion, then, strikes the student of religion and philosophy with the force of inevitability. Too bad Kilheffer is so locked into his fashionable materialist cynicism that he cannot comprehend, even vicariously, the allusive logic of Simmons' resolution in *The Fall of Hyperion*.

[It is interesting to have differing viewpoints expressed so eloquently. I must say, however, that I do not feel that "love is nothing but cheap sentimental hogwash"; my complaint is with the extension of the significance of love beyond the realm of the human psyche. For the human experiencing love (or any other emotion), it is powerful, and may well be transcendent. Nevertheless, love is not a "cosmological principle," to be discussed alongside the strong and weak nuclear forces; although I am aware that there are those who have thought so (but Aristotle? I think that may be a fairly loose interpretation, I don't recall a whole lot about love there). Lastly, my reading and admiration of Keats has left me with the conviction (as I made clear in my review) that his worldview changed radically as he learned more about the world, and I would not agree that he shared such a cosmological vision of love. Consider the desolation of some of his later poems, such as "La Belle Dame Sans Merci"—hardly indicative of a faith in the existence of love as an external universal binding force.—RRK]

Marie L. Cox, Los Angeles, California

I was very impressed with and thoroughly entertained by the Space 1990 edition of the *New York Review*. I curled up one evening, especially cozy with Mr. Kilheffer's "Hogwash: The Pig in Fantasy Literature." Nearly as enlightening as the article itself were the footnotes. I was not aware that pigs had achieved flight in 1909. It was my belief that the first airborne pigs were the stars of "Pigs in Space" of "Muppet Show" fame.

As pointed out by RK, pigs have been held in esteem by the Celts, revered in literary classics such as *Beowulf*, and used in the most derogatory associations with people. But regardless of the situation, pigs have usually been happy. For example, the expression "happy as a pig in shit" (or mud, if you prefer) is widely used to denote absolute joy. *Sesame Street* runs an animated cartoon in which a pig is leaping about in a mud puddle singing the song "I Love Being a Pig." Miss Piggy was the most glamorous and self-assured of all pigs, but it was Wilbur who received an award for fame and an outstanding personality in E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web*.

All in all, pigs have had a rich life involving literature, historical events, and the entertainment industry. Cheers, whistles, and applause to Mr. Kilheffer for giving us the inside dirt on pigs of the past.

By the way, when reading *The Mud Pits of Lost Atlantis*, I take Greg Cox's advice and grab a spoon.

Kenneth L. Houghton, New York, New York

While I was pleased, and generally informed, and even quaintly amused by your most recent issue (Number Twenty-Two), I am sending this missive because of an apparent aesthetic conflict between two of your articles.

In the space generally reserved for editorials is Donald Keller's

"Elitist Brief." Beginning with a little Card-bashing—an often necessary, albeit easy, sport—Mr. Keller argues a preference for challenging works over "entertainments." I can understand and accept his parameters; I may prefer *Ulysses*, but (1) I've read and enjoyed both and (2) I would not pretend that I am making an objective evaluation of the two works. Art is art and taste is taste, and maybe the twin shall meet. Then again, maybe not.

But does NYRSE—which generally tries to deal with Art—practice what Mr. Keller preaches? Not judging from Tony Daniel's review of Claudia O'Keefe's *Black Snow Days*, Mr. Daniel begins his commentary with praise for Miss O'Keefe's "good sentences." He then proceeds to attack every other aspect of the novel, apparently because the mood and action of the initial car race scene (20 pages of a 340-page novel) are not maintained when Eric Pope's more interesting search for the purpose of his existence in the post-apocalypse world begins in earnest. (I can imagine Mr. Daniel on Seurat's *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*: "All those dots are interesting, but a camera would have produced a better picture.")

The essence of my problem with Mr. Daniel's review—ignoring his generally vicious (vindictive?) tone—is that he is clearly unwilling to deal with the novel, whose ultimate goals are more complex than is apparent from the action-packed first scene. This appears to conflict directly with the position of Mr. Keller's—and, by association, the staff of NYRSE's—"elitist brief."

Mr. Daniel seems to believe a novel must have only one authorial viewpoint and that all action and any character development must occur "on stage." That is not the type of book Miss O'Keefe has written, and to review it as such is unfair to the author and her (prospective) readers.

Instead, he raised blanket, undocumented objections ("bad choices of viewpoint for almost every scene and sequence") which reveal more about his own shortcomings as a reviewer than about *Black Snow Days*. An objection of the type he raises tends to indicate the reviewer has not understood the work; there is nothing in Mr. Daniel's further commentary which would mitigate against that judgment.

(Not to be petty but the capsule review of *Black Snow Days* in *Locust* dealt with the novel as written and raised its "quibble" within that context. NYRSE, with its additional space, should have been able to do a better job of discussing the novel.)

Mr. Daniel's is not the type of "criticism" I would expect from a professional, Hugo-nominated publication. While his "review" is the exception to the NYRSE rule (in more ways than one), its presence can only devalue the rest of your efforts.

[It is dangerous to ascribe any one aesthetic to a publication. Don Keller's "Elitist Brief" was obviously a personal opinion, signed by him; Tony Daniel's review expressed a different aesthetic. You might not find either valid, and we appreciate your comments to that effect, but if you truly believe the statement of one individual is devalued by appearing in the same magazine as any other individual (rather than evaluating each piece on its own terms), you might perhaps reconsider your own aesthetics.—GVG]

Bryan G. Chofin, Cambridge, Massachusetts

Well, I'm with Don Keller on the subject of "elitist" fiction. Essentially what Orson Scott Card and others are saying, and to a certain extent Charles Platt is too, is that fiction should be immediately digestible, like a Twinkie. Everything a book has to offer should be accessible on the first read—it should be all surface and no depth. A good book offers a different reading experience every time it is reread, which is precisely why we do it. A bad book is spent all at once. But I like knowing that I can, at any time, pick up, say, *The Book of the New Sun*, open it at random, read for a bit, and see something that I did not see before. And no matter how many times I read this book, it will always be true (this is why no movie or videogame or comic book has ever given me quite the same satisfaction as a book—some have a high level of information density, none have really achieved the infinite regress of inspiration and enlightenment

that a great book (or any truly great work of art) can have, or at least those few that approach it (for example, the last two or three Woody Allen movies) do so by stealing essentially literary techniques, while attempts to graft filmic techniques onto books fail miserably, or just produce maybe better special effects. Big deal.) I suppose there is something to be said for being able to have completely understood the book on the first try, to know that the author has not put anything over on you, so that you do not feel inadequate or in any way inferior to the author or any other member of the author's audience, but where is the challenge, the interest, the fun? Unfortunately, for some the concepts of Escapism and Entertainment have become too closely entwined—Life is hard, requires patience, a little mental dexterity and attention, and often makes us feel inadequate because we have not understood everything fully, and in fact cannot. So some recent fiction that makes us feel the way life does. They'd rather fiction give them the feeling of control and complete understanding that they lack in dealing with their own life. The effect is not new—Orwell, Huxley, and even earlier writers noted the tendency for most people to choose forms of entertainment that, like television, for instance—which literally sends the brain into a nearly unconscious alpha-state—reduce the chance of an actual stray thought occurring between one's ears. More people will watch endless amounts of MTV than will read ANY one book published today (is it just me, or has anyone else out there noticed the frightening similarity between MTV and Buster Friendly and his Friendly Friends?). Yes, technology will provide ever more efficient forms of electronic bumblepuppy, to turn our kids' brains into guacamole while that same technology brings our world ever closer to the brink of absolute destruction, the resources of the world drained into the pockets of a wealthy few, and everyone plugged into their own personal virtual reality so that they don't even notice themselves being robbed blind, or are even paying gladly for the privilege. If it is "elitist" to stand against this, to stand up and declare loudly that THIS IS BAD, then so be it. When the machine stops and the dream ends, there had better be someone around with a working brain.

Actually, Mr. Platt, the problem with *Semiotext(e)* SF was not the mere presence of cyberpunk, but the wholly uninspired use of what has already become a set of clichéd images in SF, so that a good number of the stories did not indicate any sort of distinct authorial voice or vision—hence the cookie cutter image—certainly one of the gravest sins of writing fiction. Cyberpunk was fun while it lasted, but this book was largely an exercise in flogging the deceased dextrifier.

Jeez, do we have to listen to Panshin's rocknroll things too? For those of us who aren't hopelessly lost in Fifties nostalgia, these little forays into pop music history are less than enthralling. Can we get back to the skiffy now? (All right, as I write this, I've got Jelly Roll Morton on the CD player.)

[Er, uh, the Panshin was a parody.—DGH]

John Kessel, Raleigh, North Carolina

I appreciate the review Donald Keller did of *Good News* in the June issue. I agree with most of his reply to Scott Card's review that called my characters purposeless. I, too, thought that they were, if anything, too purposeful, and am at a loss to see how Card came up with his reading. I did try to make Lucy a sane and reasonably reliable character pushed to extremes by others, but overall I am not interested in setting up any one character as a consistent spokesman for truth (whatever that is) and would rather work by the "triangulation" method Keller suggests.

Keller is also the first person I've run into who caught the echo of Lolita in the last line of the novel. I'm impressed.

Also, I liked Keller's editorial taking Card to task over his latest assault on "li-fi." I wrote a similar, much longer reaction in March for *Short Form*, which has so far not appeared. I'm tired of Card's demagoguery, a kind of self-willed know-nothingism, on this and similar literary issues.

Sarah E. Thompson, Brooklyn, New York

If I were Sei Shōnagon writing the *Pillow Book* anew, my list of

"Hateful Things" would include not only noisy departing lovers but also: "People who cite East Asian culture in support of their own opinions without bothering to get the facts straight." I refer, of course, to Justin Leiber's remarks about Japanese art and literature, my professional specialties, in Number Twenty-Two. His naive enthusiasm for the sexual mystique of the Exotic East exceeds even James Clavel's. Personally, I find this kind of willful ignorance offensive whether it leads to condemnation or praise of the unfamiliar culture. It's a shock to see such a display of ill-informed reverse ethnocentrism in a high-grade literary magazine.

Here are some basic facts:

1) Japanese woodblock prints of the 17th to 19th centuries, which Mr. Leiber describes as "pure pornography," are not primarily erotic in content. Yes, there are many stunningly beautiful, explicitly erotic prints, but they were a relatively small percentage of the total output. On the basis of years of experience cataloging Japanese prints, I'd estimate that the erotica are under 10% of the total, probably more like 5%. Furthermore, the "Floating World" school that produced the prints is only one small part of a long artistic history. Erotic elements, although they can occasionally be found, are even less conspicuous in other schools of Japanese art.

2) The implied characterization of Sei Shōnagon's *Pillow Book* (not "*Pillow Talk*") and Murasaki Shikibu's *Tale of Genji* as erotica is extremely misleading. The title of the *Pillow Book* is not necessarily intended to have any erotic connotation but simply means that in its original form it was a little notebook kept beside the bed for recording stray thoughts. It is in fact a collection of miscellaneous essays on life at the imperial court. There are discussions of the proper conduct of love affairs, among other matters of etiquette, but absolutely no references to genitalia or actual sexual acts. The *Tale of Genji* is equally discreet; couples spend the night together, but one is never explicitly told that they did anything other than talk, even when children result from the conversation.

To judge by the garbled paraphrase of what I take to be the final paragraph of Sei Shōnagon's essay on "Hateful Things" (most of which does not deal with love affairs at all but with examples of non-erotic boorishness and nuisances such as mice in the house), I suspect that Mr. Leiber has never actually read either of these books. That's a shame, because good translations are readily available. I recommend strongly Ivan Morris's translation of *The Pillow Book*, the translations of *The Tale of Genji* by Arthur Waley and Edward Seidensticker (both excellent; pick the one whose style most appeals to you), and another delightful work by Morris, *The World of the Shining Prince*, which describes Heian court life in fascinating detail.

3) Murasaki and Sei Shōnagon, writing in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, were by no means the first to use *hiragana* (I will assume, charitably, that the misspelling "hiranga" was a typo, although I don't actually think that anyone who believes that masks were commonly worn by Heian courtiers—wherever did he get that idea?—deserves the benefit of the doubt), nor is there any real evidence that the development of writing in Japan, or elsewhere in East Asia, was "dedicated to erotica." The two Japanese phonetic syllabaries known collectively as *kana* originated in the eighth and ninth centuries as means of recording the Japanese vernacular language, which could not be adequately represented with Chinese characters due to the non-phonetic nature of the Chinese script and the extreme grammatical differences between Japanese and Chinese. *Katakana* was invented by Buddhist monks in order to provide glosses for difficult passages in (non-erotic) sacred texts. *Hiragana* was used by both men and women of the nobility for informal communication and for literary compositions in Japanese, while the Chinese language continued to be used, almost exclusively by men, for official documents and learned works, rather like Latin in medieval Europe. The development of *hiragana* and the literature utilizing it can be compared loosely with the growth of the written vernacular languages in western Europe, although the Europeans had an easier time of it since the Roman script was more readily adaptable to other languages than the Chinese. The uses of the new Japanese script certainly included the poetic exchanges that were the conventional foundation of upper-class love affairs, but people often chose to write in the vernacular for reasons other than sex

Travel diaries and poems on the beauties of nature or the glory of the Emperor were as much part of Heian literature as the romantic poetry and fiction.

As for the original use of the Chinese characters themselves, the earliest known examples, found on the Shang dynasty oracle bones of the second millennium B.C., record the results of divinations. Sexual matters are not mentioned; the Shang kings apparently did not consider them worth inquiring about. They asked Heaven instead what the weather would be like, what sort of sacrifices their ancestors prefer, and so on. In subsequent Chinese dynasties, and still late in Korea, Japan, and Viet Nam, the major use of the Chinese writing system was for bureaucratic administration. It seems likely to me that in other cultures as well, the most common use for writing was keeping track of things as material goods accumulated and civilization became more complex. Surely material prosperity and the favor of the gods are motivations even more universal and compelling than sex.

4) The notion that "pornographic sex manuals" were "perhaps the primary form of literature in ancient Islam, India, and China" is not, I hope, something that NYRFS readers are likely to take seriously enough to necessitate a full-scale refutation; but one example from later Chinese literature may give a rough idea of the actual importance of erotica relative to other subject matter. Chinese fiction of the Ming and Ch'ing (Qing, if you prefer the modern spelling) dynasties culminated in five great novels (all are available in English; the recent translations of *The Journey to the West*, by Anthony Yu, and *The Story of the Stone*, by David Hawkes, are especially recommended; and isn't it interesting that only one of these acknowledged monuments of fiction would qualify as "mainstream" today): a historical novel (*The Three Kingdoms*), a martial-arts adventure story (*The Water Margin*), a *All Men Are Brothers*, aka *Outlaws of the Marsh*, a fantasy (*The Journey to the West*, aka *Monkey*), a novel of manners (*The Dream of the Red Chamber*, aka *The Story of the Stone*), and a pornographic novel (*The Golden Lotus*). A 20% rate of occurrence, though noteworthy by Western standards, hardly makes pornography "the primary form of literature," and fiction is the genre in which pornographic content is most prominent. In Chinese poetry, drama, and essays its presence is negligible. Specialists in the literature of India and the Islamic world can probably cite similar statistics.

Finally, the suggestion that "ancient Islam, India, and China" were "more normal and less anti-sexual cultures" than our own is appalling to me as a woman. I am very glad indeed to have the full use of both my feet and my clitoris, and to be in no significant danger of being deliberately burned alive. If that's abnormal I'll take it over normalcy any day. The more I learn about life, sexual and otherwise, in ancient Asia, the happier I am to be living my own life in modern America.

I agree that our culture has many problems in the area of romantic and sexual relations, but I don't know of any other that has done noticeably better. Women were better off economically and socially in the elite class of Heian Japan than just about anywhere else in the pre-modern world, but the ladies in *The Tale of Genji* don't seem very happy about their lives. In fact, one of the weirdly modern things about the book is the emotional suffering of the women, who endure messy divorces, quasi-incest, anorexia nervosa, and general misery over the fickleness of men. The more things change . . .

My own Utopian dream of a better world for lovers involves the improvement of emotional stability and individual moral responsibility in both sexes. I think that the technologically advanced sexual mechanics imagined by Mr. Leiber would make very little positive difference in the general level of human happiness and might even detract from it by encouraging the vision of the Other as a purely sexual object—an attitude that is already implicit in his relentless sexualization of Asian culture.

[Thanks for contributing your considerable expertise; no one on the staff had the expertise to copyedit Mr. Leiber's article accurately, and leeked the time end means to find someone who could. Thanks also for your thoughts on the subject; ideas that transcend cultural boundaries and speak to all are always welcome.—GVG]

The Others Die of the Coin

The title of this month's editorial memorializes our favorite type of the month. This is our 24th issue, the completion of two years of excess, anxiety, argument, intellectual ferment and dinners at the local Mexican restaurant.

As I was on my way to this particular work weekend, travelling with Kathryn Cramer and Chip Delany back to Pleasantville from a 13-hour day teaching at Harvard Summer School (a day during which the waitress at the faculty club had spilled a beer in Chip's lap just before the sf writing class, and during which the teacher of the respectable Beginning Fiction class, which meets in the same room immediately following Kathryn's and my Horror Fiction class, had stormed in six minutes before the end of our class, interrupting Chip in a discourse on hyperbole versus euphemism, and demanded that we vacate immediately so that his class could begin on the hour exactly), I began to think about this issue of the magazine, our 24th, to be sold at a European Worldcon and the San Diego NASFIC. As the rain beat against the windshield, I asked Chip if he had perhaps in his spare time written an essay recently that he could provide for this issue. "Well," he said, "I did just write an afterword to *Stars in My Pocket* for Bantam that is actually about modernism and post-modernism and Jameson and Stan Robinson's application of Jameson's ideas to sf. And I have a copy with me if you'd like to read it."

"Yes," I said.

"Yes," said Kathryn.

And so NTRSF#24 began to take on its final form, as thematic patterns linking this issue to our ongoing evolving concerns became apparent: bibliography, literary history, literary politics, critical theory, aesthetic conflicts, extra-literary concerns and problems in the sf field—a rich, fermenting soup, tasty, nourishing, satisfying. Ah!

We never have enough room now in a single issue to print what we have on hand, and we never have the right mixture and spices on hand until the very last minute (John Clute's review was fixed to us as we were keying Chip's essay into the Mac). It's down to the wire every issue, still, but in spite of our continuing disasters, delays and surprises, each issue happens on time. Just as an aside, it took five hours of shopping this weekend to get the proper screw-driver to open the Mac to install the upgrade chips in Kathryn's computer to have it working. But this is now simply expected as part of the challenging panorama of a work weekend putting out an issue.

Don Keller has a new job, working at William Morrow. Greg Cox has a short-deadline novel-for-hire contract, and so has to skip meetings 'til it is done in August. Gordon Van Gelder is now in charge of the St Martin's Press sf line. Kathryn and I are commuting twice a week to Cambridge to teach for the summer. And somehow everyone continues to work independently on the magazine so that, when the time comes to put the issue together, we're ready. We are just about breaking even, not dying from lack of support either financial, literary, or spiritual. Lack of money can kill your magazine, but so can uncontrolled desire for it, which can seduce you into violating your aesthetics—that's the other side of the coin.

So, the 24 issue report ends: still crazy, after all these issues.

—David G. Hartwell & the Editors

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